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LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME



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LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME

BY
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("DE STENDHAL")

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IX

THE attention which he had lent to the old man's discourse, together with his extreme fatigue, had raised Fabrice's faculties to a pitch of exaltation ; sleep was long in coming to him, and when it came was disturbed by dreams which may have been presages of the future. At ten o'clock he was awakened by a tremendous din and a trembling sensation as if the walls of the tower were about to fall. Dazed and mystified, he jumped from his improvised couch, thinking the end of the world was come. His first thought was that he had become the inmate of a prison-cell, and it was some time before he recognized the sound of the great bell that forty peas-

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ants, trailing at the rope, were ringing lustily in honor of good St. Giovita.

He looked about him in search of a place whence he might see and not be seen. He saw that from his elevated station he commanded a view of the gardens and interior court of his father's castle. The sight awakened another train of thought; the idea that that father was approaching the confines of life produced an entire change of feeling. He could even distinguish the sparrows pecking at the crumbs that littered the great balcony of the dining-room. "Perhaps they are the descendants of those I tamed so long ago," he said to himself. This, like all the other balconies of the château, was adorned with numerous orange-trees planted in earthen vases of different sizes. The inner court, with its sharply defined bands of shadow and brilliant sunshine, presented a majestic aspect. The sight awoke old memories and appealed to his tenderer nature.

The thought of his father's failing state recurred to him. "But it is very strange it should be so," he said to himself; "my father is only thirty-five years my senior; thirty-five and twenty-three make only fifty-eight!" His eyes, bent on the chamber windows of

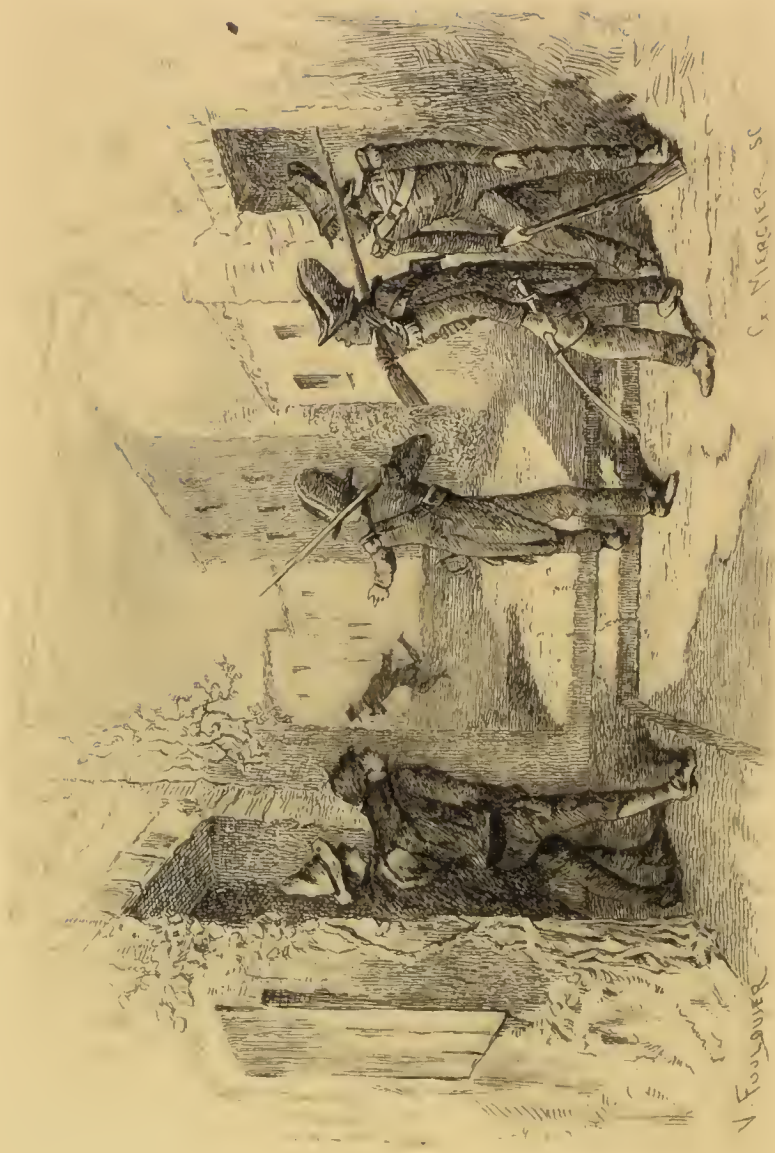
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the stern, hard man who had never loved him, filled with tears. He thought he recognized his father crossing a terrace embellished with orange-trees, to which access was had through the windows of the old man's bedroom; he shivered, and an icy chill ran through his veins; but it turned out to be only a valet. Just under the tower a number of young maidens, attired in white and grouped in bands according to their various sodalities, were engaged in tracing designs with red, blue, and yellow flowers on the pavement of the streets through which the procession was to pass. But there was a spectacle that appealed more strongly than all the rest to Fabrice's imagination. His gaze, ranging over the sunlit landscape from the summit of his tower, embraced the two arms of the lake, lying leagues away, and the lovely vision quickly effaced the memory of all the others; it awakened in his bosom sentiments of the tenderest and most elevated nature. Recollections of boyhood came thronging to his mind, and this day spent in the imprisonment of an old belfry was perhaps one of the happiest of his life.

His happiness induced in him a depth of thought that was perhaps a little foreign to

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his nature ; although scarcely arrived at the age of manhood, he speculated on the occurrences of life with the gravity of one already advanced in years. “It is a fact not to be denied,” he said to himself, after several hours of delicious reverie, “that since my arrival at Parma I have not experienced that perfect, calm delight that I found at Naples while galloping my horse on the sands of Misenum or scouring the roads of Vomero. The diverse and tangled interests of this wicked little court have made me wicked. It affords me no pleasure to hate, and I even think that I should find small comfort in the humiliation of my enemies, provided I had any—but I have none. Stop, though !” he suddenly exclaimed. “Giletti is my enemy. It is strange how the pleasure with which I could see that ugliest of mortals consigned to the tender mercies of Old Nick outlasts the transient liking that I had for little Marietta. She can’t begin to compare with the Duchess d’A—— of Naples, whom I had to love because I had made love to her. Heavens ! how I used to suffer during those long assignations with which the fair Duchess was wont to favor me ! There was never anything of the sort in the untidy little chamber, at



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once kitchen and bedroom, in which little Marietta received me twice, and for two minutes on each occasion.

“Shade of Epicurus! what do people of their class live on? It is pitiful to think of! I ought to have bestowed a pension on her and the *mamacia*—a pension of three beef-steaks, payable daily. Little Marietta served me as a distraction,” he added, “from the evil thoughts with which the vicinity of the court inspired me.

“It might have been as well if I had taken up with the life of the café, as the Duchess calls it. She seemed to have a preference in that direction, and she has ever so much more sense than I have. Thanks to her kindnesses, or even without them, and with my allowance of four thousand francs and that forty thousand invested at Lyons and which my mother means to give me, I shall be able to keep a horse, and have a few crowns left for my excavations and to form a collection. Since I am apparently doomed never to know what it is to love, those will always be the pursuits to which I shall look for happiness. I should like to revisit the field of Waterloo before I die, and see if I could recognize the spot where I was so cleverly taken from my

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horse and seated on the ground. That pilgrimage accomplished, it will be my pleasure to return at frequent intervals to this noble lake; there is no spot so beautiful in all the world—at least that is what my heart tells me. What does one gain by traveling so far in quest of happiness? I have it here, beneath my feet!

“Ah! but,” Fabrice objected to himself, “the police may drive me from Lake Como; however, I am a younger man than those who direct the affairs of the police. Here,” he added, with a laugh, “I shall find no Duchess d’A——, but I may find one of those little girls down there who are strewing their flowers on the pavement, and faith, I think I should love her quite as well. Hypocrisy, even in love, cools my ardor, and the effects our great ladies aim at are too sublime. Napoleon has inoculated **them** too successfully with his ideas of morality and constancy.

“The devil!” he exclaimed, suddenly withdrawing his head from the window, as if fearing to be recognized in spite of the great wooden shutters that served to protect the bells from the weather, “here come the gendarmes in full fig.” It was true; ten

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guardians of the peace, four of whom were sergeants and corporals, had appeared at the upper end of the main street. The senior sergeant posted them a hundred feet apart along the route of the procession. "Everybody knows me here; if I am seen it will be a hop-skip-and-jump for me from Lake Como to Spielberg, where they will chain me down with irons weighing a hundred and ten pounds on each of my legs—and how bad that will make the poor Duchess feel!"

Fabrice need not have been so alarmed if he had stopped to think a minute, for, in the first place, he was elevated more than eighty feet above the heads of the multitude, and his retreat was in comparative obscurity; then, too, the eyes of the sight-seers below were blinded by the dazzling sunlight, the effect of which was not diminished by the glare from the houses, all newly whitewashed in honor of the festival of St. Giovita. But Fabrice, with his Italian temperament, could not feel easy in his mind or enjoy the spectacle until he had interposed between himself and the police a strip of old canvas, in which he cut two peep-holes at the height of his eyes.

The bells had been pealing jubilantly for

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the last ten minutes, the procession was leaving the church, the *mortaretti* began to pop and crackle. Fabrice looked down and recognized the little esplanade, bordered with a parapet and overlooking the lake, where in his younger days he had so often endangered the safety of his little legs among the *mortaretti*—a fact that had made his mother more than usually watchful in keeping him under her eye on the mornings of fête-days.

These *mortaretti* (or little mortars), the reader should know, are nothing more or less than musket-barrels sawed up into lengths of four inches; this will explain why the country folks are such keen collectors of the old muskets with which European politics have strewn the plains of Lombardy so abundantly since 1796. These miniature cannon, four inches long, are loaded to the muzzle, planted vertically in the ground, and connected by a train of powder; they are arranged in three lines, with the precision of a battalion on parade, to the number of two or three hundred, in some convenient spot adjacent to the route of the procession. At the approach of the Host the train is fired, and then begins a scattering fusillade of short, sharp reports, producing the oddest, quaintest effect ima-

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ginable ; the women laugh and scream with delight. Nothing is pleasanter than to hear these *mortaretti* from a boat on the lake, when the sound comes softened by the distance and by the plash of the little waves. The cheerful sounds which had so often gladdened his ears in boyhood quickly dispelled the gloomy ideas which had oppressed our hero ; he went and got the Abbé's great telescope, and with its help recognized the greater part of the men and women in the procession. Many of the latter whom Fabrice had last seen as charming little girls, eleven or twelve years old, were now superb matrons, in the full flower of their lusty youth ; they restored our hero's courage, and to speak with them a moment he felt capable of braving the gendarmes.

After the procession had passed and re-entered the church by a lateral door beyond Fabrice's range of vision, the heat, even in his airy position on the tower, became unbearable ; the people retired to the shelter of their houses, and the village was as silent as if deserted. Several boats took on loads of peasants returning to Bellagio, Menagio, and other villages on the lake. Fabrice could distinguish the rhythmic strokes of the oars

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beating the water, and the trivial detail filled him with delight. If he was so easily pleased it was because of the contrast between his present circumstances and the inanity and vexations of his recent life at court. How pleased he would have been just then to take a sail of a few miles on the beautiful, tranquil lake which reflected so faithfully the azure depths of the heavens! He heard the door at the foot of the tower open; it was the Abbé Blanès's old servant, bearing a huge basket on her arm. It required all his self-control to refrain from speaking to her. "She is my friend almost as much as her master," he said to himself; "besides, I am to leave to-night at nine o'clock; surely, if I pledged her to secrecy, she would keep her word? But no; my friend would be displeased—I might compromise him with the gendarmes." And he let old Ghita go without addressing her. He made an excellent dinner, then settled himself as comfortably as he could for a few minutes' sleep; when he awoke it was half-past eight o'clock, the room was in darkness, and Abbé Blanès was shaking him by the arm.

The exertions of the morning had been too much for the good priest; he was ready to

drop with fatigue and had aged twenty years within the last few hours. He had nothing further to say of importance; seating himself in his wooden chair, "Embrace me," he said to Fabrice. He pressed the young man to his heart repeatedly. "Death," he said at last, "which soon will bring this long existence to an end, will have in it nothing so painful for me as this parting. I have some little savings which I will leave with Ghita, with instructions to take from them what she requires to supply her needs, but to pay over the remainder to you if ever you apply for it. I know the old dame; after telling her that, in her desire to save for you she will be as like as not to deprive herself of proper food unless you give her strict orders to the contrary. The obolus of an old friend may be of service to you should you ever feel the pinch of poverty. From your brother you need expect nothing but rancor and spiteful treatment; try to earn a livelihood by labors that will render you a useful member of society. I can see strange and fearful storms looming on the horizon; it may be that in fifty years the class of drones will not be tolerated among us. Your aunt and mother may not be at hand to help you in your hour

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of need, it will be your sisters' duty to obey their husbands— Begone, begone! fly!" the old man cried, excitedly; he had heard the whirring of the machinery of the clock which announced that the hour of ten was about to strike; he would not even permit Fabrice to give him a last embrace.

"Haste! haste!" he shouted; "it will take you at least a minute to descend the stairs; take care that you do not fall—it would be a frightful omen." Fabrice darted for the staircase, and as soon as he was in the street began to run. The clock struck ten just as he came in front of his father's house; each stroke reëchoed in his bosom, and caused a strange disturbance there. He stopped to reflect, or rather to abandon himself to the passionate feelings suggested by the sight of the imposing structure which he had criticized so calmly the evening previous. Footsteps aroused him from his reverie; he looked and saw himself surrounded by four gendarmes. He had two reliable pistols, the priming of which he had renewed at dinner-time; the click as he raised the hammer of one of them attracted the gendarmes' attention and had nearly caused his arrest. He saw the danger he was in, and made up his mind that he

would be the first to open fire ; he would have been justified in this, for he was one against four armed men. Fortunately the gendarmes, who had been making their rounds to shut up the taverns and dismiss the revelers, had not shown themselves altogether insensible to the politenesses that had been extended to them in several of these alluring establishments ; they were not quick enough in deciding on their line of conduct. Fabrice took to his heels and ran for his life. The gendarmes ran too for a short distance, shouting "Stop ! stop !" then all once more became quiet. After running three hundred paces Fabrice halted to get his wind. "My pistols were nearly the means of getting me nabbed. It would have given the Duchess a fine chance to say to me—if I am ever to gaze into her handsome eyes again—that I am more prone to contemplate what is going to happen ten years hence than to look out for what is going on under my nose."

Fabrice shuddered as he thought of the peril he had escaped ; he broke into a rapid walk, but after a little could not keep himself from running, which was an imprudence, for it attracted the attention of some peasants who were returning to their homes. He could

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not prevail on himself to stop until he was among the mountains, more than a league from Grianza; and even then thoughts of Spielberg caused a cold sweat to break out all over his person.

“A fine scare I’ve had!” he mentally observed. The suggested reproach almost made him ashamed of himself. “But has n’t my aunt often told me that what I need most is to learn to forgive myself? I am forever making comparisons between myself and some model of perfection such as never did and never will exist. Well, I will forgive myself for my scare, for, looking at the matter in its true light, I was disposed to defend my liberty, and certainly all the four would n’t have survived to carry me off to prison. What I am doing now,” he added, “is not in accordance with the rules of the military art; instead of retreating rapidly after securing my object and perhaps putting my enemies on the alert, here I am pursuing an idle fancy than which I doubt if all the good Abbé’s predictions are more ridiculous.”

The truth is that instead of retreating by the shortest line on Lake Maggiore, where his boat was awaiting him, he was making a

long detour for the purpose of visiting "his tree." The reader may remember a certain chestnut-tree planted by the Marquise twenty-three years before the time of the present events. "It would be just like my brother," he said to himself, "to have hired some one to cut down that tree. But people of his dense intellect are incapable of such subtle revenges; it won't have occurred to him. Besides," he added, with decision, "it would n't be a bad omen." Two hours later gloom and consternation were on his face; mischievous persons (or a storm) had passed that way and broken off one of the young tree's main branches; it hung down, withered and forlorn, from the parent trunk. Fabrice cut away the wreck tenderly with the assistance of his poniard, and pared the wound down smooth to keep the rain from entering. After that, although every minute was of value to him, for it would soon be day, he spent upward of an hour in spading up the earth around the beloved tree. These follies accomplished, he started at a brisk pace for Lake Maggiore. He did not feel so badly on the whole; the tree was healthy, more vigorous than ever, and twice as tall as it had been five years before. The accident was nothing;

the loss of the limb, once it was cut away, would be no detriment to the tree—indeed, it would be more graceful now that it commenced to branch higher from the ground.

Fabrice had not covered a league when a broad belt of dazzling white appeared in the eastern sky, against which were profiled the summits of the Resegon di Lek, a well-known mountain of the district. The road he was pursuing began to be filled with peasants; but Fabrice, instead of combining further measures for his retreat, allowed himself to dwell with emotion on the sublime and touching aspect of the forests that surround Lake Como. There are none finer in the world; I do not speak of those which yield the most *bright new crowns*, as the Swiss say, but of those which appeal most deeply to the soul. For one in our hero's position, with those worthy gentlemen the Lombardo-Venetian gendarmes thrusting their attentions on him, to stop to listen to this language was little less than madness. "I am a mile and a half from the frontier," he said to himself at last; "I shall fall in with customs officers and gendarmes making their morning rounds. My coat of fine cloth will appear suspicious to them; they will ask me for my passport;

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now the name on that passport is that of a notorious jailbird; it is evident that I shall be under the painful necessity of killing somebody. If the gendarmes are traveling in pairs this morning, as is their custom, I can't conscientiously wait to pull trigger till one of them has me by the collar; a moment's delay on my part, and there I am in Spielberg." Fabrice, horror-struck by the idea of its being necessary for him to fire first, perhaps on an ex-trooper of his uncle, Count Pietranera, ran and hid himself in the hollow trunk of a huge chestnut. He was renewing the priming of his pistols when he heard a man coming toward him through the wood and singing very melodiously a charming air by Mercadante, then much in vogue in Lombardy.

"That is a good omen," said Fabrice. The air, which he listened to attentively, somewhat mollified his rising exasperation. He looked up and down the highway, but could see no one. "The singer is approaching by some cross-road," he said to himself. At the same instant, almost, he descried a valet, attired in a sober livery in the English style and mounted on a hackney, advancing at a walk and leading by the bridle a blooded

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charger, a handsome animal, though perhaps a trifle too lean.

“Ah!” said Fabrice to himself, “were I to reason like Count Mosca, when he says that a man’s rights and duties toward his neighbor are measured by the degree of peril he is in, I should treat that fellow to one of my lead pills, and, once astride the lean horse, could afford to snap my fingers at the gendarmes. On my return to Parma I could send a sum of money to the man or to his widow—but I won’t think of it; it’s too horrible!”







X

MORALIZING thus, Fabrice leaped down upon the highroad which connects Lombardy and Switzerland, and which at that spot is four or five feet lower than the level of the forest. "If my man should take alarm," he said to himself, "off he will go at a gallop and leave me standing gaping after him like a fool." He was then within ten paces of the valet, who had ceased singing; our hero saw that he was afraid and was liable at any minute to turn and make off. With no definite object as yet in view, Fabrice bounded forward and seized the lean horse by the bridle.

"My friend," he said to the now thoroughly terrified man, "I am not an ordinary highwayman, in proof of which I am going to give you twenty francs to begin with; but I

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am compelled to borrow your horse ; I must skip this ranch at once, otherwise I am a dead man. I am pursued by the four Riva brothers, those great hunters of whom you have doubtless heard ; they caught me awhile ago in their sister's bedroom ; I jumped from the window, and here I am. They followed me into the wood with their dogs and guns. I hid in that great chestnut-tree because I saw one of them cross the road ; their hounds will soon be on my trail ! I am going to use your horse to carry me to a place a little way beyond Como ; I am on my way to Milan to seek the protection of the Viceroy. If you submit gracefully I shall leave your horse at the post-house, with a present for you of two napoleons. If you offer the least resistance I shall kill you with these pistols that you see. If, after I am gone, you put the gendarmes on my track, my cousin, the brave Count Alari, equerry to the Emperor, will break every bone in your body."

Fabrice invented this yarn as it fell from his lips in a perfectly even and pacific tone.

"I would have you know, moreover," he laughingly added, "that my name is no secret ; I am the Marchesino Ascanio del Dongo, and my château is at Grianta, not

far from here. You —— !” said he, raising his voice, “let go that horse !” The dismayed valet had not a word to say. Fabrice passed his pistol into his left hand, seized the bridle that the other released, jumped into the saddle, and rode off at a hand-gallop. When he had put a distance of three hundred yards between them it occurred to him that he had forgotten the promised twenty francs ; he drew rein. The road was still deserted save for the valet, who was following him at a gallop. He signaled to the man to come up, and when he was within fifty paces drew from his pocket a handful of silver and threw it on the road, then started off again. He saw the fellow alight and gather up the coins. “There’s a man to my liking,” Fabrice laughed to himself ; “not an unnecessary word.” He pressed forward at a slapping pace in a southerly direction, halted at a sequestered house, and after a few hours’ rest resumed his journey. It was two o’clock in the morning when he reached Lake Maggiore. His boat was anchored off the shore ; he gave the appointed signal and it drew in to land. Seeing no peasant to whom he could commit his borrowed steed, he gave the noble animal his liberty. Three hours later he was

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at Belgirate. There, finding himself among friends once more, he thought he might take a rest. He was in excellent spirits; his enterprise had succeeded perfectly. Shall we venture to state what were the real causes of his joyous mood? His tree was coming on splendidly, and he had been rejuvenated and refreshed in spirit by his tender communion with Abbé Blanès. "I wonder," he asked himself, "if he really believes all his predictions? or, as my brother has depicted me as a Jacobin, a lawless infidel, capable of every crime, was it not rather his purpose to warn me and try to keep me out of scrapes?" Two days after that our hero was at Parma, where he greatly diverted the Duchess and the Count by relating, with his customary scrupulous exactitude, the incidents of his journey.

On his arrival Fabrice found the porter and all the domestics of the Sanseverina mansion accoutered in brand-new black liveries.

"Whose loss have we to mourn?" he asked the Duchess.

"The excellent man known to the world as my husband died recently at Baden. He left me this palace; that was in fulfilment of our contract; but as a token of his esteem he

also added a legacy of three hundred thousand francs, which embarrasses me exceedingly ; I don't feel like renouncing it in favor of his niece, the Marquise Raversi, who is constantly playing me tricks for which she deserves hanging. You are posted in such matters ; you must find me a good sculptor ; I will spend the three hundred thousand francs on a monument to perpetuate the Duke's memory." The Count related some anecdotes apropos of la Raversi.

"I tried to placate her by kindness," said the Duchess, "but all to no purpose. As for the Duke's nephews, they are all colonels or generals, thanks to me. To show their gratitude they never let a month pass that they don't send me some filthy anonymous letter. Letters of that description have become so numerous that I was obliged to hire a secretary to read them."

"And that is the least of their iniquities," Count Mosca continued ; "they fabricate scandalous accusations wholesale. Twenty times I might have brought the whole gang before the courts, and Your Excellency may imagine," he added, addressing Fabrice, "what chance they would have stood before my faithful judges."

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“I should not think *that* would be a very pleasing reflection,” said Fabrice, with a naïveté that in court circles was refreshing; “for my part, I should prefer to see them convicted by judges who decide their cases in accordance with the law.”

“I will thank you to give me the names and addresses of such magistrates, illustrious seeker after truth; I will write to them to-night before I go to bed.”

“If I were minister and my judges were not honest, I should be ashamed of myself.”

“But it seems to me,” rejoined the Count, “that Your Excellency, who has such an admiration for the French, and even lent them the assistance of his puissant arm not long ago, is forgetting one of their most widely accepted maxims: Better kill the devil than let the devil kill you. I should like to see how you would go to work to rule those incendiaries who spend their days and nights reading the history of the French Revolution with judges who would acquit such men as I am speaking of. It would not be long before they would let rascals of whose guilt there was not the shadow of a doubt go scot-free, and would applaud themselves as Brutuses. But I have a question that I should

like to ask you: you who are so squeamish—does your conscience never trouble you in relation to that handsome but lean horse that you cast adrift on the shore of Lake Maggiore?”

“It is my intention,” said Fabrice, with great dignity and gravity, “to remit to the owner of the horse a sum sufficient to reimburse him for the advertising and other expenses contracted in securing the animal’s return by the peasant who found him. Moreover, I shall read the *Milan Journal* every day to see if a lost horse is advertised in it; I could describe the one in question faithfully.”

“He is deliciously innocent,” said the Count to the Duchess.—“But where would Your Excellency have been,” he laughingly pursued, “if, while galloping that borrowed horse as if intent on breaking your precious neck, he had chanced to stumble? You would have been in Spielberg, my dear young sir, and all my credit with the Austrian government would hardly have sufficed to knock off thirty pounds’ weight from the irons on your legs. You would have spent ten or a dozen years in that gay resort; like enough your legs would have mortified, in which

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case the surgeons would have cut them off for you—”

“Ah, be merciful! Let’s have no more of such a forbidding romance!” cried the Duchess, her eyes full of tears. “We have him back again—”

“At which I rejoice no less sincerely than yourself, you may rest assured,” the Minister replied, very seriously. “But tell me, please, since this self-willed boy was bent on entering Lombardy, why did he not come to me and secure a passport under an assumed name? Had he been arrested I would have started at once for Milan, and the good friends I have there would have shut their eyes to facts and declared their police had arrested a subject of the Prince of Parma.—I cheerfully admit that the narrative of your adventures is absorbing and amusing,” the Count went on, in a less solemn tone; “I could not help laughing at what happened when you emerged from the forest on the highroad; but between ourselves, since that valet had your life at his disposal, you would have been justified in taking his. We are going to raise Your Excellency to a brilliant station; at least I have orders to that effect from madame here, and I don’t think my

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worst enemies can accuse me of ever having disobeyed her commands. Think what an everlasting sorrow it would have been to both of us if in that neck-or-nothing ride you took on the lean horse he had chanced to stumble! I don't know but it would have been best," the Count added, "that you were killed outright."

"You are in a very tragic mood to-night, my friend," said the Duchess, with emotion.

"We are surrounded by tragic events," replied the Count, in the same tone; "we are not in France, where each act of the play ends with a jig, and where one can commit treason and get off with one or two years' imprisonment; and I really feel that I am doing wrong in speaking of these matters so lightly.—Come now, my little nephew, suppose I find ways and means to make a bishop of you—for upon my word I don't see how I can start you in life as Archbishop of Parma, as the Duchess here, with her usual moderation, would have me do—suppose yourself a bishop and no longer in a position to avail yourself of our wise counsels, tell me a little what would be your policy?"

"I would not let the devil kill me if I could kill him first, as my French friends

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say so reasonably," Fabrice replied, with flashing eyes; "I would guard the position you had made for me by every means in my power, not excluding dagger and pistol. I remember reading in the del Dongo Genealogy the history of that one of our ancestors who built the castle of Grianta. Toward the close of his life his very good friend Galeas, Duke of Milan, sends him on a visit of inspection to a stronghold on our lake; there were fears of another irruption on the part of the Swiss. 'But wait a moment; let me give you a line of introduction to the commandant of the place,' says the Duke of Milan just previous to dismissing him. He writes and hands him a brief note; then asks it back again in order that he may seal it. 'It will look more courteous,' says the Prince. Vespasian del Dongo starts on his journey, but as he sails down the lake he remembers an old Greek tale, for he was versed in the lore of books. He opens his good master's letter, and in it finds instructions enjoining the commandant of the place to put him to death immediately upon his arrival. The Sforza, absorbed in the comedy he was playing with our ancestor, had left a blank space between the last line of the letter and his signature;

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this space Vespasian del Dongo fills in with an order appointing him governor of all the fortresses on the lake, and tears off the top of the sheet containing the Duke's original instructions. Arriving at the fort, and his credentials being duly recognized, he consigns the commandant to a dungeon, declares war against Sforza, and at the end of a few years exchanges his fortress for those vast estates which have enriched all the branches of our family and will some day contribute four thousand francs a year toward my support."

"You talk like a book," the Count laughingly exclaimed, "and it was a beautiful stratagem that of your stout old ancestor; but it is only once in a dozen years that the opportunity offers to become famous through an exploit of that kind. A man who is not brilliant, but is industrious, prudent, attentive to matters of detail, will often have the pleasure of passing your men of imagination in the race. It was his imagination that betrayed Napoleon into surrendering to the prudent John Bull instead of making an effort to reach America. John in his counting-house must have had a good laugh at the letter in which he quotes Themistocles. It

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always has been and always will be the case that our proud Don Quixotes have to knock under to the plebeian Sancho Panzas. If you can but persuade yourself to attempt nothing out of the common I have no doubt that you will make a very respected—if not a very respectable—bishop. However, my previous remark remains: Your Excellency behaved inconsiderately in the matter of the horse; you were within an ace of a long sojourn in prison.”

His words gave Fabrice a great start; he remained speechless with astonishment. “I wonder can that be the imprisonment with which I am threatened?” he said to himself. “Is that the crime that I was warned against committing?” Blanès’s predictions, which, viewed as prognostications of future events, he was disposed to laugh at, assumed in his eyes the importance of veritable presages.

“Well, what ails you now?” asked the Duchess, in astonishment. “The Count seems to have given you unpleasant matter for reflection.”

“A new truth has dawned on me, and my mind, instead of taking up arms against it, receives it. It is true, I had a narrow escape from going to prison for the remainder of

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my days. But that valet was such a pretty fellow in his English coat—it would have been a pity to have killed him!”

His consequential little air of virtue delighted the Minister.

“He will answer very well in all respects,” he said, looking at the Duchess.—“I must tell you, young man, that you have made a conquest, as desirable, perhaps, as any you could have made.”

“Ah!” thought Fabrice, “some pleasantry at my expense about little Marietta.” But he was wrong. The Count went on:

“Your evangelic simplicity has won the heart of our venerable archbishop, Father Landriani. We shall make you a grand vicar some of these fine days, and a pleasant feature of the business is that the three present grand vicars—men of worth, able and industrious, of whom two, I think, were grand vicars before you were born—will unite in writing a very handsome letter to their archbishop requesting that you take precedence over them. They take this step primarily in recognition of your virtues, and also because you are the grandnephew of the illustrious prelate Ascanio del Dongo. When I heard of this testimonial to your virtues I immedi-

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ately promoted the nephew of the oldest of the vicars-general to a captaincy; he had been a lieutenant since the time when Marshal Suchet besieged Tarragona."

"Go at once and pay a visit of affection to your archbishop—don't stop to change your dress!" exclaimed the Duchess. "Tell him of your sister's approaching marriage; when he learns that she is to be a duchess you will appear more apostolic than ever in his eyes. Remember you are to know nothing of what the Count has just told you concerning your future prospects."

Fabrice hastened off to the archiepiscopal palace, where he was simple and modest. This was a manner that it never cost him an effort to assume; he would have done well to study more to affect the air and bearing of a *grand seigneur*. While listening to good Monsignor Landriani's long and rambling discourse he said to himself, "Should I have fired my pistol at the valet in charge of the lean horse?" His reason told him yes, but his better feelings revolted at the image of the handsome young man falling, mutilated and bleeding, from his saddle.

"The prison that was yawning for me had the horse stumbled, was it the prison

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with which I am threatened by so many portents?"

The question was of the utmost importance to him, and the Archbishop was well pleased with the air of attention with which he listened to his homilies.





XI

IN leaving the Archbishop, Fabrice turned his steps in the direction of little Marietta's quarters. As he drew near the house he distinguished Giletti's loud, brawling voice, who had sent out for wine and was carousing with his friends the prompter and the candle-snuffer. The *mamacia*, or deputy mother, answered his signal.

"Great events have happened since you were here last," she cried; "two or three of our actors are accused of celebrating the fête of the great Napoleon with an orgy, and our poor troupe, which people falsely stigmatize as Jacobin, has been ordered to evacuate the States of Parma—hurrah for Napoleon! But the Minister came down with his dust, so they say. The one thing certain is that Giletti has money—how much I don't know, but I



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saw him with a handful of crowns in his possession. Marietta had five crowns from our director to pay her fare to Mantua and Venice, and I had one. The little girl loves you still, but she is afraid of Giletti; three days ago, at the last performance we gave here, he actually tried to kill her; he gave her two awful thumps, and, what was meanest of all, tore her blue shawl. If you would give her a blue shawl it would be real nice of you, and we could say we won it in a lottery. There is to be a fencing-match to-morrow at the quarters of the drum-major of the carbineers; you can learn the time from the bills that are stuck up on all the walls. Come and see us; if he attends the match, and there is reason to believe he will be away for a while, I will come to the window and signal that the coast is clear. Try to bring us something nice; for Marietta loves you to distraction."

Feelings of remorse predominated in Fa-
brice's mind as he made his way down the
dirty staircase of the miserable barrack. "I
am not changed one bit," he said to himself;
"all the fine resolutions that I formed that
evening on the bank of our lake, when I
took such philosophic views of life, have

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taken flight and vanished. My mind was not in its usual state; it was all a dream, and melts away at contact with cold facts.—The moment for action has arrived,” Fabrice told himself as, at about eleven o’clock at night, he returned to the Sanseverina palace. But it was all in vain that he summoned up his courage and essayed to speak with that sublime sincerity which had appeared to him so easy during his vigil that night on the banks of Como. “I shall offend the person whom in all the world I love the best; if I speak I shall have the air of a comedian who has ill learned his part; it is only in my moments of exaltation that I am good for anything at all.”

“The Count has been very good to me,” he said to the Duchess after he had given her the particulars of his visit to the Archbishop; “I appreciate his kindness the more that I think I can see he is not overmuch in love with me; therefore I wish my behavior toward him to be everything it should be. He is conducting his excavations at Sanguigna, and is as infatuated with them as ever, to judge by the pains he gave himself day before yesterday: he rode twelve leagues on horseback that he might have two hours with

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his workmen. He has just uncovered the foundations of an ancient temple, and fears that should any fragments of statues be unearthed they will be stolen; it occurs to me to offer my services to go to Sanguigna and watch his treasures for a day or two. I am to have another interview with the Archbishop to-morrow at five o'clock; I might start when that business was completed, and have the cool of the evening for my journey."

The Duchess did not reply at first.

"It would seem that you seek pretexts for leaving me," she said at last, very gently; "you are scarcely returned from Belgirate, and you find a reason for going away again."

"Now is the time to say my say," said Fabrice to himself. "But I was a little impetuous, a little flighty out there at the lake; I failed to see, in the enthusiasm of my sincerity, that my good intentions are likely to commit me to an impertinence. What I should have to say would be, 'My sentiments toward you are those of the tenderest and most devoted friendship,' and so forth and so on, 'but love is a passion to which my heart is a stranger.' Would not that amount to pretty much the same as if I were to say, 'I see that you are in love with me, but look

out for yourself—I can't pay you in the same coin'? If she is in love, the Duchess won't be particularly pleased at being found out; and if her feeling for me is one of simple friendship, she will be disgusted by my impudence—and that is a kind of offense that a woman never forgives."

While he was balancing these weighty considerations Fabrice was unconsciously pacing the salon, with a grave and majestic air, like a man who sees misfortune impending over him.

The Duchess watched him admiringly; he was no longer the little child whom she had held in her bosom, he was no longer the nephew prompt to obey her slightest behest; he was a reflecting man, in whose love any woman might rejoice. Rising from the ottoman on which she was seated, she threw her arms around his neck in a transport of affection:

"Do you wish to avoid me, then?" she said to him.

"No," he replied, with the air of a Roman emperor, "but I would wish to be discreet."

The remark was capable of more than one interpretation; Fabrice had not the courage

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to go further and perhaps inflict an irreparable wound on the feelings of so adorable a creature. He was too young, too susceptible to emotion ; he could not find suitable terms in which to express what he desired to say. By a natural impulse, and in spite of all his virtuous resolutions, he gathered the charming woman to his breast and rained kisses on her. At that juncture they heard the sound of the Count's carriage-wheels entering the courtyard, and almost at the same moment the Count himself made his appearance in the salon ; he seemed deeply agitated.

“You inspire strange passions,” he said to Fabrice, who heard him with confusion.

“This afternoon the Archbishop had his usual Thursday audience of His Most Serene Highness. The Prince tells me that the Archbishop, who was ill at ease, started off with a long and studiously arranged harangue, evidently learned by rote, of which His Highness could at first make neither head nor tail. Landriani wound up by declaring that the interests of the Church in Parma demanded that Monsignor Fabricio del Dongo should be appointed his first vicar-general, and later, at the completion of his twenty-fourth year,

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his coadjutor, with reversion of the archbishopric in the future.

“I confess I was frightened,” said the Count. “It was taking the bull by the horns with a vengeance, and I was expecting a display of the Prince’s ill humor; but he looked at me and laughed, and said in French, ‘I think I can see your hand in this, monsieur!’”

“‘I can swear before God and before Your Highness,’ I cried, laying all the emphasis I could upon my words, ‘that this is the first time I have heard *reversion* mentioned.’ Then I told the truth—exactly what passed here between us a few hours ago; and I added with unction that should His Highness at some future time see fit to grant a little bishopric as a commencement I should esteem myself the happiest and most fortunate of mortals. I think the Prince believed me, for it pleased him to be gracious; he said to me, with perfect directness and simplicity: ‘This is a matter between me and the Archbishop, in which you have no concern. The worthy old man has composed for my instruction a long and passably tedious report, at the conclusion of which he introduces a proposition in the line of his duties. I told him pretty

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coldly that the matter was young and that there was a lack of precedent for it at my court; that it would look too much like honoring a draft drawn on me by the Emperor should I promise so exalted a dignity to the son of one of the great officers of his Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. The Archbishop declared that there had been no recommendation from that quarter. It was stupid in him to tell a thing like that to *me*. It surprised me, coming from a man of his understanding; but he is always muddled whenever he has anything to say to me, and to-day he was worse than usual, which led me to think that he must want the matter very badly. I told him that I knew better than he that del Dongo had no recommendations from high quarters, that no one at my court denied he possessed capacity, that there was not a great deal said against his morals, but that I feared he was susceptible to enthusiasm, and that I had promised myself never to place in positions of importance lunatics of that description, on whom one never knows when he can rely. Then,' His Highness continued, 'I was compelled to listen to another tirade almost as long as the first; the Archbishop pronounced an eulogy on the loyalty of the Church.

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“Blockhead,” I said to myself, “you are driving; you are endangering the prospects of the appointment which was nearly granted; your course was to stop short and express your gratitude in a few well-chosen words.” But that was not in his programme; he continued his homily with an intrepidity that was ridiculous. I racked my brains for an answer that should not be too hard on the little del Dongo; I found it, and you shall judge if it was well found: “Monsignor,” I said to him, “Pius VII was a great pope and a sainted man; he was the only one of all the crowned heads who dared say *no* to the tyrant who beheld Europe at his feet. He was susceptible to enthusiasm, and that was the cause, when he was Bishop of Imola, of his writing his famous pastoral of the Citizen Cardinal Chiaramonti in favor of the Cisalpine Republic.”

“My poor Archbishop stood staring at me like a man stupefied, and to complete his stupefaction I said to him very seriously, “Adieu, monsignor; I will take twenty-four hours to consider your proposition.” Even after I had dismissed him by the word “adieu” the poor man continued his ill-turned and ill-timed entreaties. Now, Count Mosca

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della Rovere, I charge you to tell the Duchess that I am unwilling to delay, even by twenty-four hours, a matter that I know will give her pleasure. Sit down there and write to the Archbishop the letter of consent that will end this business.' I wrote the letter; he signed it, and said to me, 'Carry it this instant to the Duchess.' Here is the letter, madame, to which I am indebted for the happiness of seeing you again this evening."

The Duchess read the missive and was enchanted. The Count's long narrative had afforded Fabrice time to regain his faculties; he evinced no surprise, but received the incident with the serene indifference of a great nobleman to whom a stroke of luck that would deprive an ordinary man of his reason is nothing more than an every-day occurrence. He expressed his thanks in suitable but dignified terms, and concluded by saying to the Count:

"A good courtier always humors his master's hobbies. Yesterday you expressed a fear that should your laborers at Sanguigna discover any valuable remains they might appropriate them; I have a passion for excavations, as you are aware, and if you will permit me I will go down there and keep an eye on your

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men. I can start for Sanguigna to-morrow evening, after I shall have made the proper acknowledgments to His Highness and the Archbishop."

"But have you any idea," said the Duchess to the Count, "of what may be the cause of this sudden fondness of our good Archbishop for Fabrice?"

"There is no mystery about the matter; the grand vicar, who has a brother a captain in the army, said to me yesterday, 'Father Landriani starts from this fixed principle, that the titular is superior to the coadjutor; and he is overjoyed to have conferred a favor on a del Dongo and have him under his control.' Whatever redounds to Fabrice's credit—birth or other qualities—adds to his pride and pleasure; it gratifies him to have such a man as his assistant. In the second place, Master Fabrice has found favor in his eyes; he does not humiliate and frighten the old man by his overweening airs. Lastly, he has been cherishing for the last ten years a very cordial hatred for the Bishop of Piacenza, who in and out of season asserts his claim to succeed Landriani in the diocese of Parma, and who, moreover, is the son of a miller. It is with an eye to this succession

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that His Grace of Piacenza has entered into an alliance offensive and defensive with the Marquise Raversi, and these intrigues are now causing the Archbishop much anxiety for the success of his cherished design—to have a del Dongo in his suite, to wit, and subject to his orders.”

Two days afterward, at an early hour of the morning, Fabrice was superintending the operations at Sanguigna, over against Colorno (which is to the Princes of Parma what Versailles is to the French king). The excavations were being made in the plain, close alongside the highway which runs from Parma to Casal-Maggiore, the first town beyond the Austrian frontier. The workmen had dug a long trench across the plain, eight feet deep and as narrow as possible; their efforts were directed to discovering the ruins of a second temple which, so rumor had it, was still extant in the middle ages, close to the old Roman Way. Although the work was sanctioned by the Prince, some of the farmers looked with no friendly eye on the long trench that was being driven across their fields. They had an idea, in spite of all that was told them, that the men were digging to find a hidden treasure, and Fabrice's

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presence was useful in restraining them from violence. He watched the proceedings with interest, and did not find his occupation tiresome; every now and then a coin or medal was turned up, which he took care that the laborers did not pocket.

The weather was magnificent; it was about six o'clock in the morning. He had borrowed an old single-barreled gun, with which he practised on the larks; one of them, being wounded, fluttered away and fell upon the highway. As Fabrice ran after it he descried in the distance a carriage coming from Parma and apparently making for the frontier at Casal-Maggiore. He had just finished reloading his gun when, the ramshackle vehicle coming up at the shambling trot of its venerable nag, he recognized little Marietta; she was accompanied by the fascinating Giletti and the old woman who played the rôle of mother.

Giletti took it in his head that Fabrice had posted himself there in the middle of the road and with a gun in his hand with a set purpose to insult him, and perhaps to carry off little Marietta. He jumped bravely down from the carriage; he had in his left hand an old rusty horse-pistol as long as a man's arm, and in his right a sheathed sword that he was

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accustomed to wear when the exigencies of the troupe made it necessary for him to play the part of a nobleman.

“Ah, ruffian !” he shouted, “I rejoice to find you here, within a league of the frontier ; I will attend to your case ; your violet stockings shall no longer shield you.”

Fabrice was making eyes at little Marietta, unmindful of the jealous Giletti and his cries, when all at once he saw the rusty pistol, its muzzle not three feet away, aimed directly at his breast. He had barely time to knock up the firearm, using his gun as a single-stick ; the pistol was discharged in the air, injuring no one.

“Stop where you are, fellow,” Giletti bawled to the vetturino ; at the same time he had the presence of mind to seize his adversary’s fowling-piece near the muzzle and hold it averted from his body. Fabrice and he were each tugging at the weapon with might and main. Giletti, much the stronger of the two, was coming up hand over hand along the barrel, and about to gain possession of the arm, when Fabrice, that he might not profit by his advantage, pulled the trigger and discharged the piece. He had taken pains to assure himself beforehand that the muzzle

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was at least three inches over Giletti's right shoulder; the explosion took place close to the latter's ear. He was slightly dazed for a moment, but quickly recovered himself.

"Ah, scoundrel, you would murder me! But I will teach you a lesson." The actor cast aside the scabbard of his sword and attacked Fabrice with the utmost vigor and agility. The latter was defenseless and thought it was all day with him.

He ran toward the carriage, which was standing a dozen paces behind Giletti; he passed it on the left, and by grasping the spring and using it as a fulcrum made the turn rapidly and reached the right-hand door, which was open. Giletti, under full headway with his long legs, and to whom it had not occurred to avail himself of the fulcrum of the spring, kept on for some distance in his initial direction before he could pull himself up. As Fabrice came opposite the open door he heard Marietta say to him in an undertone:

"Look out for yourself; he will kill you. Here, take this!"

At the same moment a great knife, a sort of hunting-knife, was dropped from the carriage into the road. Our hero stooped to take

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it up, but at the same moment received a thrust in the shoulder from Giletti's sword. On rising he found himself face to face and almost in contact with the actor, who gave him a smashing blow between the eyes with the handle of his sword; the blow was delivered with such force that Fabrice's reason tottered. He did not know how near he was to death at that moment. Luckily for him, Giletti was too close to use the point of his sword. Fabrice, on coming to himself, took to his heels and ran with all his might; he threw away the sheath of his knife while running, then, stopping and turning quickly, saw his pursuer at three paces' distance. Giletti's momentum was such that he could not stop. Fabrice struck at him with the point; Giletti managed with his sword to deflect the blow slightly upward, but the blade entered his left cheek and made an ugly wound. He passed close to Fabrice, who felt a stinging sensation in the thigh; it was Giletti's knife, that its owner had succeeded in opening. Fabrice made a bound to the right; he turned, and at last the two combatants found themselves with the proper fighting distance between them.

Giletti was swearing like a trooper. "Ha,

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rascally priest, I'll slit your weasand for you!" he constantly repeated. Fabrice was winded and unable to speak; he was suffering much pain from the effects of the blow in his face, and his nose was bleeding plentifully. He succeeded in parrying several thrusts with his knife; it seemed to him, in a vague, hazy kind of way, that he was participating in a public fencing exhibition. This fancy was suggested by the presence of his workmen, who, twenty-five or thirty in number, had formed a ring about the combatants, taking care to maintain a respectful distance, however.

The conflict seemed to be flagging a little, the blows no longer followed one another with the same rapidity, when it suddenly occurred to Fabrice, "My face pains me so, I should n't wonder if the brute has disfigured me." Transported with rage at the thought, he bounded on his enemy with his knife held low and pointing upward. The long keen blade entered Giletti's chest on the right side and came out at the left shoulder; at the same moment Giletti's sword pierced Fabrice's upper arm in its entire length, but the wound was only skin-deep and was more painful than serious.

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Giletti had dropped; as Fabrice stepped up to him, keeping a watchful eye on the knife which he held in his left hand, the fingers of that hand relaxed with a spasmodic movement and the knife fell to the ground.

"The scoundrel is dead," said Fabrice. He looked at his face; blood was pouring from his mouth. Fabrice ran to the carriage.

"Have you a mirror?" he cried to Marietta. The girl looked at him with frightened eyes and made no answer. The old woman with perfect coolness opened a green velvet work-bag and presented to Fabrice a small hand-mirror. He examined himself in it, passing his hands tentatively over his face. "My eyes are all right," he said to himself; "that 's something to be thankful for." He looked at his teeth; they were not broken. "Why is it that I suffer so?" he said, in a low voice.

"Because your cheek was between the handle of Giletti's sword and the bone that nature has placed there," the old woman answered. "Your cheek is black and blue and horribly swollen, but apply leeches immediately and it will amount to nothing."

"Oh, certainly; leeches immediately!" said Fabrice, with a laugh, and his serenity

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returned to him. He saw that the laborers had flocked around Giletti and were eying him curiously without venturing to touch him.

“Why don’t you do something to assist the man?” he shouted to them. “Take off his coat.” He was about to say more, but chancing to raise his eyes, beheld at a distance of three hundred paces five or six men advancing deliberately along the highway toward the scene.

“They are gendarmes,” he reflected, “and as there has been a man killed they will arrest me, and I shall have the honor of entering the city of Parma in state. What a dainty morsel that will be for la Raversi’s friends and the courtiers who hate my aunt!”

Without stopping to think twice he thrusts his hand into his pocket, pulls out all the money that was there, and throws it to his laborers, then darts into the carriage.

“Keep the gendarmes from pursuing me,” he shouts to his men, “and I promise to make you all rich; tell them that I am innocent, that that man attacked me and would have killed me. And you,” he said, addressing the vetturino, “whip up your horses;

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don't spare the lash—you shall have four bright gold napoleons if you put the Po between me and those fellows before they overtake me."

"It 's a bargain!" said the vetturino. "But you need have no fear, master; those men are on foot and can never overtake us; my little horses will trot right away from them." So saying, he sent his team forward at a gallop.

The word "fear" employed by the driver had jarred a little on our hero's susceptibilities; the fact is, he had been horribly frightened as the result of the blow in the face he had received from the pommel of Giletti's sword.

"We may meet mounted men coming toward us," said the prudent vetturino, who had no idea of losing his four napoleons if he could help it, "and our pursuers may shout to them to arrest us." The meaning of which was, Reload your arms.

"Ah, how brave you are, my little abbé!" exclaimed Marietta, giving Fabrice a hug. The old woman was looking out through the window; after a little she drew in her head.

"There is no one pursuing, signor," she

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said to Fabrice, as coolly as an old campaigner, "and there is no one on the road ahead of us. You know what a fuss the Austrian police make over trifles; if they see you coming down to the Po at a pace like this they will arrest you, see if they don't."

Fabrice looked out at the window.

"Trot your horses," he directed the driver. — "What kind of a passport have you?" he asked the old woman.

"I have three instead of one," she replied, "and every blessed one of them cost four francs. Isn't it a shame that poor artists who are traveling all the year should be fleeced in such a manner! Here is the passport of the Signor Giletti, dramatic artist — that will do for you; here are mine and Marietta's. But Giletti had all our money in his pocket; what are we to do?"

"How much was there?" inquired Fabrice.

"Forty beautiful bright crowns of five francs," replied the crone.

"You mean six and what little change there was," Marietta interposed, with a laugh; "I won't allow my little abbé to be swindled."

"Surely you can't blame me, signor," the

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old woman cynically rejoined, "for trying to make thirty-four francs out of you? Thirty-four francs to you are nothing, and think, *we* have lost our protector. Who is going to secure our lodgings for us, bargain with the vetturini when we travel, and browbeat the tradesmen? Giletti was not handsome, but he was a handy man to have around; and if the little one had n't been a fool he need never have known a thing of your little love-affair and you would have given us lots of money. I assure you we are very poor."

Fabrice was touched; he took out his purse and gave the old woman a few napoleons.

"You see," he said to her, "that I have only fifteen left, so it will be useless attempting to pull my leg¹ further."

Little Marietta gave him another hug and the old dame kissed his hand. The carriage continued to advance at a jog-trot in the direction of the river. When at last the striped black-and-yellow posts were sighted that announced the end of Italy and the be-

¹ That the purists may not be horrified, I beg to state that this is the literal rendering of the original, *me tirer aux jambes*. Who was the daring innovator who first transplanted this flower of Gallic idiom into our English garden?—TR.

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ginning of Austria the old woman said to Fabrice :

“Your best course will be to cross the frontier on foot with Giletti’s passport in your pocket. Marietta and I will stop a few moments to make a bit of toilet; besides, the officers will have to inspect our baggage. If you will be advised by me, pass through Casal-Maggiore without any appearance of hurry; you will even do well to stop at a café and take a drink of brandy; but once outside the town put your legs in motion and step out lively. The Austrian police is diabolically sharp and vigilant; it won’t be long in learning that there has been a man killed; you are traveling with a passport that is not your own—all these circumstances are more than enough to insure you a couple of years’ imprisonment. Take the right-hand road and make for the Po at once when you leave the town; hire a boat, and seek refuge in Ravenna or Ferrara; don’t remain on Austrian soil a minute longer than you can help. With two napoleons you can bribe some functionary to furnish you with a passport; the one you have would be your ruin; remember that you have killed a man.”

While walking the short distance that he

had to cover to reach the bridge of boats at Casal-Maggiore, Fabrice read attentively Giletti's passport. Our hero was badly frightened; he had a lively recollection of all that Count Mosca had told him of the risks he would incur in setting foot again on Austrian soil; and there, only two hundred paces before him, was the terrible bridge which was to give him admission to that country whose capital city in his eyes was Spielberg. But what other course was open to him? The duchy of Modena, which adjoins the duchy of Parma on the south, had a treaty with the latter State by virtue of which it restored the other's fugitives; the western frontier, which is lost among the mountains of the Genoese territory, was too distant—his mishap would be known at Parma long before he could gain the shelter of the mountains; the only refuge left him was the Austrian States on the left bank of the Po. Thirty-six hours or two days might possibly be consumed in the negotiations looking to his arrest; he would have that much the start of his pursuers. Upon due reflection Fabrice burned his own passport with the fire of his cigar; in Austrian jurisdiction it would be safer for him to be a vagabond than Fabricio

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del Dongo, and it was more than likely that he would be searched.

Apart from the repugnance which he naturally felt to being indebted for his safety to a document that had been the property of the ill-fated Giletti, the passport was full of discrepancies that would prove difficult of explanation : Fabrice's stature was barely five feet five inches, which was materially different from the five feet ten recorded in the descriptive list ; he was in his twenty-fourth year and appeared younger, while Giletti's age was set down as thirty-nine. Our hero paced the mole that adjoins the bridge of boats across the Po for a full half-hour before he could make up his mind to descend the steps. "What advice should I give another in my place ?" he asked himself at last. "Why, to cross the bridge, of course ; it is unsafe to remain a moment on Parmesan soil ; the duty of the police is to arrest a man who has killed another, even though acting in self-defense." He explored his pockets and tore up all his papers, retaining only his handkerchief and cigar-case ; he desired to abridge as far as possible the examination that he would have to undergo. He thought of a fatal objection that would be raised, and

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which he would be unable to answer satisfactorily : he was to give his name as Giletti, and all his linen was marked F. D.

As the reader has doubtless observed, Fabrice was one of those unfortunates who are constantly being harassed by their imagination. A Frenchman of equal or even of inferior courage would have crossed the bridge at once and never stopped to count the cost ; but then he would also have brought all his coolness to the undertaking, and Fabrice was far from cool when a little man dressed in gray at the end of the bridge said to him, "Step into the police office and show your passport."

The office boasted four extremely dirty walls well garnished with nails from which were suspended the pipes and greasy hats of the clerks. The great pine table behind which these worthies were intrenched was stained with ink and wine ; two or three fat account-books, bound in green leather, rivaled the rainbow in the hues of their discolorations, and the edges of their leaves were black from contact with unwashed fingers. On a great pile of other books were three magnificent laurel wreaths that had done duty a day or two before at one of the Emperor's fêtes.

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Fabrice noted all these wretched details, and an unpleasant sensation seized him ; they were in such sorry contrast with the luxurious neatness of his own pretty suite in the Sanseverina palace. He had no choice but to enter the squalid office, and that as an inferior ; *nolens volens*, he was to submit himself to an examination.

The clerk who extended a yellow hand for his passport was small and black, and wore a pinchbeck breastpin in his cravat. "He looks like an ill-tempered brute," thought Fabrice. The man appeared surprised by what he read in the passport, the perusal of which occupied him fully five minutes.

"You have had an accident, I see," he said, with a significant glance at his visitor's cheek.

"The vetturino dumped us into the ditch." Then silence reigned again, the functionary casting shy glances at the traveler.

"I have it," said Fabrice to himself ; "he is going to tell me that he is sorry to have to inform me that I am under arrest." All sorts of insane ideas came and went through our hero's head, who was not very logical just then. For instance, it occurred to him to make a dash for liberty through the open door of the office. "I strip off my coat, I

throw myself into the Po, and I think I might manage to swim across. Anything is better than Spielberg." While he was calculating the chances of this enterprise the clerk was observing him intently, and the two men's faces were a study. To be confronted with danger is an inspiration to the reflecting man; it raises him, so to speak, to a higher plane than his own level, while to the man of imagination the same occasion will bring visionary notions, often brave, it is true, but too frequently senseless.

The air of offended dignity with which our hero bore the scrutiny of the man with the brass breastpin was a pleasant sight to see. "Should I kill the fellow," said Fabrice to himself, "my sentence would be death or the galleys for twenty years, which would not be so bad as Spielberg, with a hundred and twenty pounds of irons on each leg and a diet of bread and water—and that would last for twenty years, so that I should be forty-four when I came out." The unreflecting youth forgot that, having destroyed his passport, the clerk of police had no means of knowing that he was the Fabrice del Dongo who was "wanted" for rebellion.

Our hero was badly enough frightened, as

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may be seen ; he would have been more so had he known the anxieties that were troubling the clerk. This man was Giletti's friend ; his surprise may be imagined when he saw his passport in the possession of another party. His first thought was to put that party under arrest ; then he reflected that it was not improbable that Giletti might have sold his passport to this fine young gentleman, who had every appearance of having recently broken the Prince's peace in Parma. "If I arrest this man," he said to himself, "I shall be putting Giletti in a hole ; it will come out that he sold his passport. On the other hand, what will my bosses say if they discover that I, Giletti's friend, put my visa to his passport in the possession of another?" The clerk rose, stretched himself, and yawned, then said to Fabrice, "Wait, signor ;" adding, from a habit of his tribe, "there seems to be a difficulty." "The difficulty is, how am I to get away?" said Fabrice, in an aside.

The functionary left the office, leaving the door open behind him and the passport lying on the table. "The danger is obvious," thought Fabrice ; "I shall just take my passport and recross the bridge at a walk ; if the gendarme questions me I will tell him that

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I forgot to obtain the visa of the police at the last village I passed through." Fabrice already had the paper in his hand when, to his unutterable astonishment, he heard his friend of the brass breastpin say :

"Faith, this heat is too much for me ; I can't stand it any longer—I 'm going over to the café for a nip. Step into the office when you 've smoked your pipe out ; there's a passport to be indorsed ; the traveler is waiting."

As Fabrice was stealing from the room on tiptoe he found himself confronted by a young man with a pleasant face who was humming to himself, "Well, let 's visa this passport and have done with it ; we 'll show 'em my pretty signature."

"In what direction is the signor going?"

"To Mantua, Venice, and Ferrara."

"Ferrara be it, then," replied the clerk. He took a stamp from the table, printed the visa in blue ink on the back of the passport, wrote the words "Mantua, Venice, and Ferrara" in the space left blank for the purpose, and waved the paper in the air several times to dry the ink ; then he dipped his pen in the inkstand again preparatory to affixing his signature, an operation to which he devoted infinite pains. Fabrice kept close watch on

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his every movement. The clerk examined his signature complacently and added a dot or two and a flourish; at last he handed the document to Fabrice, saying, airily, "A pleasant journey to you, signor."

As Fabrice was retiring, using superhuman exertions to restrain himself from breaking into a run, he felt some one plucking at his sleeve; he instinctively carried his hand to his poniard, and but for the houses that surrounded him on every side might have been tempted to commit an indiscretion. The man who had stopped him, noticing his dismay, said, apologetically:

"I called to the signor several times, but received no answer. Has the signor any declaration to make at the custom-house?"

"I have nothing about me but my handkerchief; I am on my way to the house of a relative in this neighborhood, where there is to be a hunting-party."

He would have been in a nice predicament if he had been asked to name that relative. Owing to the excessive heat and the various emotions to which he had been subjected, our hero was as wet as if he had been dipped in the Po. "My courage is all right so long as I have only play-actors to deal with, but clerks

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wearing brass breastpins are too much for me. I think the adventure might inspire me with a comic sonnet for the Duchess."

On entering Casal-Maggiore Fabrice struck off to the right into a squalid street that led down to the Po. "I begin to feel the need of the succor of Bacchus and Ceres," he said to himself, and entered a little shop above whose door hung something that resembled a dirty dish-clout, fastened to a staff and inscribed with the legend *Trattoria*. A ragged sheet, suspended from a couple of barrel-hoops and falling to within three feet of the ground, served as an awning to protect the entrance of the trattoria from the direct rays of the sun. A half-dressed and very pretty woman received our hero respectfully, much to his delight; he made haste to tell her that he was dying of hunger. While the woman was getting the breakfast ready there appeared upon the scene a man apparently about thirty years old; he had omitted the usual salutation on entering. All at once he jumped up from the bench on which he had thrown himself negligently down and said to Fabrice, "*Eccellenza, la riverisco*" ("I salute Your Excellency"). Fabrice's spirits were high just at that moment, and instead of at-

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tributing sinister motives to the fellow he laughingly replied :

“ And how the devil comes it that *you* know My Excellency ? ”

“ What, does n't Your Excellency remember Ludovic, once coachman to Mme. Sanseverina ? I was a great sufferer from chills and fever at Sacca, the country house where we went every summer ; so I asked madame for my pension and left her service. Now I am a rich man, for instead of the pension of twelve crowns, which was the very utmost I was entitled to, madame told me that in order that I might have leisure to knock off a sonnet now and then—for I am a sort of poet in the vulgar tongue—she would give me twenty-four, and His Excellency the Count assured me that if ever I got in difficulties I had only to come to him. I had the honor of driving monsignor once when, like a good Christian, he went to keep his retreat at the monastery of Velleja.”

Fabrice looked at the man and thought he recognized him. He had been one of the most dandified of the domestics of the Sanseverina household ; now that he was rich, as he declared, his attire consisted of a coarse and ragged shirt and a pair of canvas trousers

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that barely came to his knees, to which were added heavy shoes and a hat much the worse for wear. Moreover, his beard was of two weeks' growth. While eating his omelet Fabrice conversed with him on terms of equality; he thought he detected evidence that Ludovic was the lover of the landlady. He hurried through his breakfast, then said in a stage-whisper to his new friend, "I would like to have a word with you."

"Your Excellency need not fear to speak before madame; she is perfectly reliable and a most excellent woman," said Ludovic, with a sentimental air.

"Well, my good friends," Fabrice unhesitatingly replied, "I am in trouble and have need of your assistance. In the first place, I can assure you that there is nothing political in my affair; a man wanted to kill me because I spoke to his mistress, and I killed him; that's all."

"Dear, dear! the poor young man!" exclaimed the landlady.

"Your Excellency may count on me!" cried the coachman, his eyes sparkling with enthusiastic devotion. "Where does Your Excellency wish to go?"

"To Ferrara. I have a passport, but would

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prefer to have nothing to do with the gendarmes, who may know more of matters than is desirable."

"When was it you did for the man?"

"This morning, about six o'clock."

"Is there no blood on Your Excellency's clothing?" asked the hostess.

"I was thinking of that," remarked the coachman; "and besides, people in this neighborhood don't wear clothes made from such fine cloth; they would be likely to attract attention. I will step over to the Jew's and buy a second-hand outfit. Your Excellency is of about my build, only a little thinner."

"Don't call me Your Excellency, please; it is dangerous."

"All right, Your Excellency," replied Ludovic as he left the shop.

"Stop, stop!" cried Fabrice; "you've forgotten the money—come back!"

"Why speak of money?" said the hostess; "he has sixty-seven crowns in his pocket which are entirely at your service. And I too," she added, lowering her voice, "have forty crowns that you are heartily welcome to; one has n't always money about him when these little accidents happen."

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Fabrice had removed his coat on entering the trattoria because of the heat.

“Your waistcoat might make trouble for us should any one come in ; people about here are n’t used to seeing such handsome English cloth, and they would talk.” She gave our fugitive a canvas waistcoat dyed black that belonged to her husband. A tall young man came in through a door at the rear of the shop ; he was dressed with some attempt at elegance.

“This is my husband,” said the hostess. “Pietro Antonio”—addressing her spouse—“this gentleman is a friend of Ludovic’s ; he has had trouble this morning across the river, and he wants to get to Ferrara.”

“All right,” said the husband, very courteously, “we can place him there ; we have Charles Joseph’s boat.”

Tears rose to our hero’s eyes, another weakness of his that we shall acknowledge as unhesitatingly as we did his terrors in the office near the bridge. He was deeply moved by the unselfish devotion of these poor peasants ; he thought, too, of the generosity of his aunt, and wondered whether he could not persuade her to reward them in accordance with their deserts. Ludovic returned with a great bundle.

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“People are beginning to talk about you,” he said to Fabrice, in a tone of disquietude; “they remarked your uncertain manner as you left the main street and entered our *vicolo* [lane]; they say you had the appearance of a man trying to conceal himself.”

“Upstairs with you to the chamber, quick,” said the husband.

This chamber was a large and handsome room, with oiled paper in the two windows in place of glass; it contained four immense beds, each of them six feet wide and five high.

“Make haste, make haste!” said Ludovic. “There is a fool of a newly appointed gendarme who has been making love to the woman downstairs, and whom I warned to mind his business unless he wanted to get a bullet in his back some fine night when on patrol; if the hound should hear these rumors about you he will like as not try to arrest you here and then accuse Theodolinda of keeping a place of resort for evil-doers.

“What!” continued Ludovic, seeing our hero’s blood-stained shirt and his wounds bound up with handkerchiefs, “the pig defended himself, did he? There is evidence enough there to cause your arrest a hundred

times over — I forgot to buy a shirt.” Without further ceremony he went to the closet, abstracted one of the husband’s shirts, and gave it to Fabrice, who was soon fitted out in such a way that he looked like a well-to-do countryman. Ludovic took down a net that was hanging from the wall, placed Fabrice’s clothes in the receptacle designed for fishes, ran swiftly down the stairs, and left the house by the back door; Fabrice followed him.

“Theodolinda,” he cried as he passed the door of the shop, “hide the things we have left upstairs; and you, Pietro Antonio, send us a boat as quickly as you can; we will wait for it among the willows. The pay will be liberal.”

Ludovic conducted Fabrice over more than twenty ditches. Long, springy planks placed across the widest of these ditches served the purpose of bridges, and Ludovic drew them after him when they had crossed. On reaching the last obstacle he pulled the plank in viciously. “There,” he said, “now we can stop to breathe; the dog of a gendarme will have to make a circuit of two leagues to catch you. You are pale as a ghost,” he said to Fabrice; “I did not forget the brandy-flask, though.”

“It comes in very nicely; the wound in

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my thigh is beginning to make itself felt, and then, too, I don't think I have quite gotten over the awful fright I received in the inspector's office at the bridge."

"You had reason enough to be scared," said Ludovic. "With a shirt drenched with blood as yours was, I can't conceive how you ever dared to put your nose in such a place. As for the wounds, I have some knowledge of such matters. I will bring you to a nice cool spot where you can get an hour's sleep; the boat will come and take us aboard there, if so be that a boat is to be obtained here; if not, when you shall be a little rested we will trudge on two short leagues farther to a mill, where I pledge myself to secure a boat. But although Your Excellency's judgment is far better than mine, there is a matter that I feel I ought to speak of: madame will be horribly distressed when she hears of this affair; all sorts of rumors will be afloat—that you are mortally wounded, that you killed your man unfairly—who knows what all? And the Marquise Raversi certainly won't fail to aggravate the news as far as is in her power. Had not Your Excellency better write?"

"And how can I get a letter to her?"

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“The men of the mill whither we are bound earn twelve sous a day; to Parma and return is a journey of three days—say four francs for the man’s time and two francs for wear and tear of shoe-leather. If the errand was in behalf of a poor man like me it would cost six francs; as it is for the service of a gentleman I will say twelve.”

When they came to their resting-place in the midst of a dense, cool thicket of willows and alders, Ludovic trotted off a good hour’s march in quest of writing materials. “Heavens, what a comfortable spot this is!” exclaimed Fabrice. “Farewell, fickle Fortune! I shall never be archbishop!”

Ludovic on his return found him sleeping soundly and would not wake him. It was not until near sunset that the boat arrived; as soon as Ludovic saw it in the distance he aroused Fabrice, who wrote two letters.

“There is another thing that I should like to suggest,” said Ludovic, with an evident effort, “but for the fear of displeasing Your Excellency, who is so much cleverer than I am.”

“I am not such a blockhead as you seem to think,” replied Fabrice; “go on and say what you have to say. I shall always think of you as my aunt’s faithful servant and the

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man to whom I owed my escape from a very nasty predicament."

Still more persuasion was required before Ludovic could be induced to speak, and when he had at last made up his mind he opened with an exordium that lasted full five minutes. Fabrice was becoming impatient, but restrained himself by the reflection, "Who is to blame? We are, because of our miserable vanity, that this man has so often taken note of from his seat on the box." Ludovic's devotion at last prevailed with him and he ventured to free his mind:

"What do you suppose the Marquise Raversi would give your messenger to obtain possession of those two letters? They are in your handwriting, and consequently would be legal evidence against you. I fear Your Excellency will take me for an inquisitive meddler; perhaps, too, the idea of laying the writing of a poor ignorant coachman before madame's eyes may offend Your Excellency; but at the risk of being considered impertinent the peril you are in forces me to speak. Would it not be best for Your Excellency to dictate those two letters to me and let me take them down? In that case I alone should be compromised, and that to

no extent worth speaking of, for at need I could swear that you came to me with an ink-horn in one hand and a pistol in the other and compelled me to write."

"Give me your hand, my dear Ludovic," cried Fabrice; "and to prove that I desire to have no secrets from a friend like you, take the letters and copy them just as they are." Ludovic understood all that was implied in this mark of confidence, and was deeply gratified; but when he had copied a few lines, seeing the boat approaching rapidly:

"The task will be the sooner done," he said to Fabrice, "if Your Excellency will have the goodness to dictate the letters to me." When they were completed Fabrice formed an A and a B under the last line, and upon a scrap of paper that he afterward crumpled in his hand wrote in French: "*You may trust A and B.*" The messenger was to conceal the scrap of crumpled paper in his clothing.

When the boat came within hailing distance, Ludovic called to the boatmen, addressing them by names other than their own; they made no reply, and landed five hundred fathoms farther down the stream, keeping a vigilant lookout to see they were not observed by customs officers.

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"I am at your service," said Ludovic to Fabrice; "shall I act as your messenger and carry the letters to Parma, or would you prefer that I accompany you to Ferrara?"

"I should have hardly dared ask from you such a service as to accompany me to Ferrara. I must try to land and slip into the city without showing the passport. I can't endure the thought of traveling under Giletti's name, and shall have to depend on you to procure me another passport."

"Why did n't you speak of that at Casal-Maggiore? I know a fellow, a government spy, who would have sold me an excellent passport, and very reasonably, too—forty or fifty francs."

One of the two boatmen was a native of a village on the right bank of the Po, and consequently did not require a foreign passport to travel to Parma; he undertook to convey the letters to their destination. Ludovic, who could handle an oar, and the other man were to row the boat.

"On the lower Po," he said, "we shall encounter armed boats belonging to the police; we shall have to keep out of their way." A dozen times they were obliged to land and hide among the willows of small islands that

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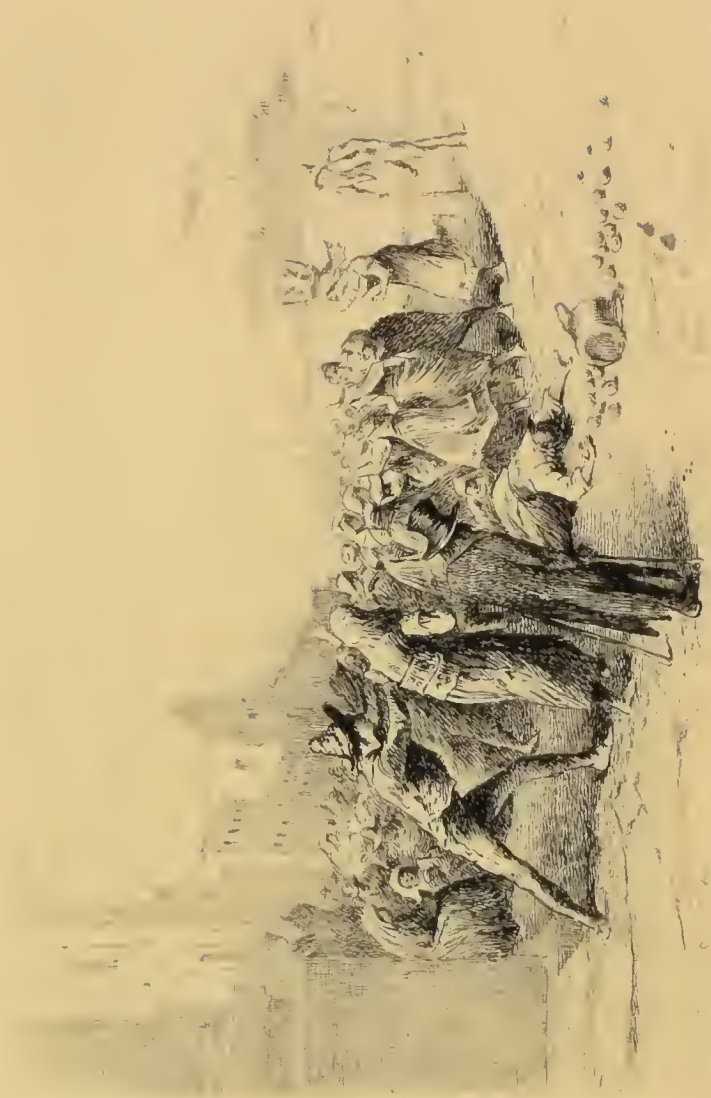
hardly rose above the level of the water. Ludovic took advantage of these intervals of repose to recite to Fabrice some of his sonnets. The ideas were original and sometimes striking, but were marred by the expression, which was abominable; the strangest part of the matter was that the ex-coachman's narrative was vivid and picturesque; he became frigid and commonplace as soon as he resorted to pen and paper. "It is just the opposite of what we see in the world," Fabrice mentally remarked; "our poets have the knack of expressing themselves gracefully on the most trivial subjects, but their hearts are empty and have no longer anything to say." He saw that he could afford this faithful servant no greater pleasure than to correct his faults of spelling.

It was not until the night of the second day that Fabrice could land with safety, in a clump of alders, a league on the hither side of Ponte Lago Oscuro. He lay hid all the next day in a hemp-field while Ludovic went on in advance to Ferrara, where he hired a couple of small rooms in the house of a poor Jew, who was quick to see that there was money to be made by one who knew how to hold his tongue. At nightfall, as it was get-

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ting dark, Fabrice entered Ferrara riding a little horse; he had need of the animal's assistance, for the trying heat of the sail down the river had affected him, and the knife-cut in the thigh and the wound in the shoulder inflicted by Giletti's sword at the beginning of the combat had inflamed, and fever had set in.







XII

THE Jew, their landlord, had called in a leech, who, likewise scenting the money that was in the purse, said to Ludovic that his conscience compelled him to make his report to the police on the wounds of the young man whom he, Ludovic, had called his brother.

“The law is plain,” he added, “and it is perfectly evident that your brother never injured himself, as he claims he did, by falling from a ladder with an open knife in his hand.”

Ludovic answered the honest surgeon by tranquilly assuring him that, if he decided to obey the dictates of his conscience, he should do himself the pleasure, before leaving Ferrara, of paying him a visit with an open knife in *his* hand. When he related the incident to Fabrice the latter expressed his dis-

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approval, but there was nothing for it but to pull up stakes and decamp at once. Ludovic told the Jew that he was going to give his brother a breath of fresh air. He went out and engaged a carriage, and our friends left the house, whose door they were never to darken again. All these proceedings, due to the absence of a passport, doubtless strike the reader as somewhat tiresome. This particular kind of annoyance has ceased to exist in France; but in Italy, and especially in the vicinity of the Po, the passport is an endless topic of conversation. Once they were outside the walls of the city, like simple excursionists enjoying an outing, Ludovic dismissed the carriage, then reëntered Ferrara by another gate, and returned with a *sediola* that he had hired for a journey of twelve leagues to take up Fabrice. When they were near Bologna our friends directed their driver to take them across fields to the road which leads from Florence to Bologna; they spent the night in the sorriest inn they could find, and the next morning, Fabrice feeling equal to the exertion of walking a little, entered Bologna in the guise of tourists. They had burned Giletti's passport; the actor's death was doubtless a matter of notori-

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ety by that time, and there was less danger in being arrested for not having a passport than for having the passport of a murdered man.

At Bologna Ludovic enjoyed the acquaintance of several domestics in families of note ; it was thought best that he should call on them and see how the land lay. He told them that coming from Florence in company with his younger brother, the latter, feeling the need of more sleep, had allowed him to leave their inn alone, an hour before the rising of the sun. He was to rejoin him at the village where he, Ludovic, proposed to rest during the heat of the day. But his brother failing to appear, Ludovic had determined to return and look for him ; he had found him lying by the roadside, robbed of his property and grievously hurt by men who had forced a quarrel on him. The brother was a handy, tidy lad, a competent groom and driver, knew how to read and write, and would be glad to find a situation with some good family. There was a sequel to the tale, that Ludovic held in reserve, to be given to the world as to him might seem convenient, to the effect that after Fabrice's fall the robbers had fled, carrying with them the little satchel in

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which were their linen and both their passports.

On his arrival at Bologna, Fabrice, feeling weak and tired, and not daring without a passport to apply for quarters at an inn, had entered the magnificent Church of St. Petronius. It was deliciously cool there; little by little a sensation of repose and well-being came to him. "Ingrate that I am!" he suddenly said to himself, "I enter a church, and it is only for my comfort and refreshment, as if it were a café!" He sank to his knees and devoutly returned thanks for the manifest protection that had been accorded him since he had had the misfortune to kill Giletti. The danger, at which he still shuddered as often as he thought of it, was that his appearance might be remembered by the clerks in the police office at Casal-Maggiore. "How came it," he asked himself, "that that clerk, whose eyes spoke so eloquently of his suspicions, who read and reread my passport again and again, never noticed that my stature was not five feet ten, that I am not thirty-nine years old, that my face is not badly disfigured by the smallpox? How shall I ever render sufficient thanks to Thee, O my God! And to think that I have

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so long delayed to come and prostrate myself before Thy mercy-seat! My foolish pride would have persuaded me that it was to vain human wisdom that I owed my escape from Spielberg, which already was yawning to receive me."

He spent more than an hour in this comforting communion, face to face with the immeasurable Divine goodness. Ludovic entered without his hearing him, and came and stood before him. Fabrice, whose face had been buried in his hands, raised his head, and his faithful attendant beheld the tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Return an hour hence," Fabrice said to him, rather sharply.

Ludovic forgave his manner for the sake of his piety. Fabrice knew by heart the seven penitential psalms and repeated them several times; he dwelt longest on those verses which seemed most applicable to his present circumstances.

There were many things for which he sought forgiveness from his Maker; but it is worthy of remark that while enumerating his sins it did not occur to him to include among them the scheme for raising him to the archbishopric, solely because Count Mosca

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was prime minister and considered the position and the grandeur it entailed suited to the nephew of the Duchess. He had not coveted it with passion, it is true, but he had looked forward to it exactly as he might have looked forward to a post as minister or general. It had never struck him that his conscience might have something to say to this pet project of the Duchess. This is a noteworthy trait of the religion for which he was indebted to the teachings of the Jesuits of Milan. This religion incapacitates its professors from investigating phenomena that are anywise new or strange, and in particular denounces all self-examination as the deadliest of sins; it is a step in the direction of Protestantism. To know one's sins one must apply to his parish priest, or read the list of offenses printed in the book entitled *Preparation for the Penitential Sacrament*. Fabrice had by heart the list of sins, compiled in the Latin language; it was one of the things he had learned at the theological school at Naples. So, in reciting this list, when he came to the article *murder* he very properly accused himself before God of having killed a man, but in self-defense. Over the articles relating to the sin of simony (the

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purchase of ecclesiastical dignities) he glided rapidly, giving them not the least attention. Had any one proposed to him that he should give a hundred louis to be made grand vicar to the Archbishop of Parma he would have rejected the suggestion with scorn ; but though he was neither lacking in intelligence nor, less still, in logic, it never once occurred to him that to use Count Mosca's influence to promote his purposes was simony. That is one of the triumphs of the Jesuits' educational methods : to accustom their pupils to disregard injunctions that are as clear as daylight. A Frenchman, reared in the atmosphere of selfishness and skepticism that prevails at Paris, might have accused Fabrice of hypocrisy, at the very moment when our hero was laying bare his soul before God with the deepest humility and the most perfect sincerity.

Fabrice did not leave the church until he had prepared the confession that he proposed to make the following day. He found Ludovic sitting on the stone steps of the fountain that occupies the center of the great square in front of St. Petronius's. As after a violent storm the air is purer and clearer, so Fabrice's soul was tranquil and at peace with itself.

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“I am very comfortable; the pain of my wounds seems almost to have left me,” he said to Ludovic. “But first of all let me ask your forgiveness; I answered you ill-temperedly when you came and spoke to me in the church; I was absorbed in my meditations. Well, what is the news—how stand our affairs?”

“As well as possible: I have engaged lodgings, scarcely worthy of Your Excellency, it is true, with the wife of a friend of mine, a very pretty woman, and, moreover, on terms of intimacy with one of the chief men of the police. To-morrow I file a formal declaration that we have had our passports stolen; the declaration will be favorably received, but I shall have to pay postage on a letter the police will write to Casal-Maggiore to find out if there is living in that commune a certain Ludovic San-Micheli, who has a brother named Fabricio in the service of Her Grace the Duchess Sanseverina at Parma. It is all right; *siamo a cavallo*” (an Italian saying: “We are safe”).

Fabrice’s face suddenly assumed a serious expression; he requested Ludovic to wait for him a minute, returned to the church almost on a run, and was scarce within the sacred

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doors than he prostrated himself and kissed the stone flags with fervid humility. "It is a miracle, Lord," he exclaimed, the tears rising to his eyes; "when Thou beheldest my soul disposed to return to the path of duty Thou didst save me. Gracious Lord! it is possible that some day I may die suddenly by violence; do Thou remember then the frame of mind in which I am now." It was with emotions of the liveliest joy that he recited anew the seven penitential psalms. Before leaving the edifice he approached an old woman who was seated before a great Madonna and beside a triangular frame of iron placed vertically on a stand of the same metal. On the outer edges of the triangle were numerous small, sharp-pointed excrescences, designed to hold the wax tapers that the faithful are wont to burn before the famous Madonna of Cimabué. There were only seven candles lighted at Fabrice's approach; he fixed this circumstance in his memory with the intention of reflecting on its significance at some time in the future.

"How do you sell your candles?" he asked the woman.

"Two baiocchi apiece, signor."

They were not much thicker than a lead-pencil and only a few inches long.

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“How many is there room for still on your triangle?”

“Let’s see; there are seven burning—sixty-three.”

“Ah,” said Fabrice to himself, “sixty-three and seven are seventy: another circumstance to be remembered.” He paid for his candles, of which he placed in position and lighted the first seven, knelt to make his offering, then, rising, said to the old woman:

“It is for mercies received.”

“I am hungry as a wolf,” he said to Ludovic as he came up with him.

“Let’s not go to a restaurant—come home to our lodgings; the landlady will go out and buy materials for breakfast. She will filch a few bajocs, and will look out for our interests all the more closely in other matters.”

“No, no; that will protract my sufferings another hour; I can’t let you do that,” Fabrice said, with the happy laugh of a child, and pushed his way into a restaurant not far from St. Petronius’s. To his great surprise he saw, seated at a table near his own, Pépé, his aunt’s first valet and confidential man, the same who had been sent to meet him at Geneva after his French campaign. Fabrice signed to the man to be silent, and despatch-

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ing the remainder of his breakfast, rose from the table, his smile of contentment still playing about his lips. Pépé followed him, and for the third time that morning our hero entered St. Petronius's. Ludovic, from motives of discretion, remained outside upon the square.

“*Hé, mon Dieu*, my lord! How are Your Lordship's wounds? The Duchess is almost distracted; for the whole of one day she believed you dead and abandoned to the vultures in some island of the Po; I must send off a courier to her this very minute. I have been looking for you for the last six days; three of them I spent at Ferrara, ransacking the hotels.”

“Have you a passport for me?”

“I have three, and each of them different: one with Your Excellency's name and titles in full, another with your name only, and the third under a supposititious name, Joseph Bossi; each of them is in duplicate, moreover, and a few strokes of the pen will enable Your Excellency to arrive from Florence or from Modena, as Your Excellency may deem expedient. All you will have to do will be to go for a ride outside the city walls. His Excellency the Count would be pleased to have

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you take lodgings at the Hotel del Pelegrino, whose proprietor is his friend."

Fabrice, apparently with no distinct aim in view, strolled carelessly up the right-hand aisle to the spot where his candles were burning; his eyes sought the Madonna of Cimabué, and, kneeling, he said to Pépé, "I wish to render thanks a moment." Pépé followed his example. On leaving the church Pépé noticed that Fabrice gave a twenty-franc piece to the first beggar who asked him for an alms. The man's vociferous exclamations brought flocking about the liberal donor the swarms of mendicants of every description that infest the square of St. Petronius. Every one wanted his share of the napoleon. The women, despairing of penetrating the pushing, struggling throng that surrounded him, threw themselves on Fabrice, clamorously demanding if he had not given his napoleon with intent that it should be divided among all the good God's poor. Pépé, threatening them with his gold-headed cane, ordered them to leave His Excellency in peace.

"Ah, Excellency, Excellency!" the women all cried in chorus in louder, shriller tones, "for the love of God, another napoleon for the poor women!" Fabrice redoubled his

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speed, the women pursued him with their vociferations, male members of the fraternity came streaming in from every quarter, and the affair began to assume the proportions of a miniature insurrection. Every individual in the strong-lunged and indescribably filthy crowd was shouting "Excellency." It was not without difficulty that Fabrice finally extricated himself from his predicament; the incident recalled him to things of earth. "It is no more than I deserve," he said to himself, "for allowing myself to mingle with the rabble."

Two women maintained their pursuit as far as the gate of Saragossa, by which he left the city; P  p   stopped them by displaying his cane and throwing them a few small coins. Fabrice ascended the charming hill of San-Michele in Bosco, strolled about a portion of the city outside the walls, took a path that landed him in the Florence road a half-mile from the city, and finally re  ntered Bologna, where he gravely delivered to the Inspector of Police a passport in due form which contained his description to a dot. If this document was to be believed he was Joseph Bossi, a student of theology. Fabrice noticed a small blot of red ink, to all appear-

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ance the result of chance, at the lower right-hand corner of the sheet. Two hours later he had a spy following him about, owing to the title of *Excellency* bestowed on him by his companion in front of St. Petronius's, when there was nothing in his passport to show that he had a right to the title.

Fabrice was aware of the spy's attentions, and snapped his fingers at them; he gave no thought to passports or police, and went about enjoying himself with the zest of a boy let loose from school. Pépé, who had orders to remain with him, seeing that he and Ludovic got on so well together, determined to go in person and carry the good news to the Duchess. Fabrice wrote two long letters to the persons most dear to him; then it occurred to him to write a third to the venerable Archbishop Landriani. This letter produced unexpected effects; it contained a faithful account of the combat with Giletti. The kind-hearted prelate, in the zeal of his affection, hurried off to read the epistle to the Prince, who was pleased to listen to it, being curious to know on what grounds the young monsignor would attempt to justify so atrocious a murder. Thanks to the Marquise Raversi's numerous friends, the Prince, as

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well as the entire city of Parma, firmly believed that Fabrice had secured the assistance of twenty or thirty peasants to assassinate a poor play-actor who had had the insolence to dispute with him the possession of little Marietta. In Paris it is the mode that gives us what we call *truth*; at despotic courts the same service is performed by the most adroit intriguer.

“How the deuce!” said the Prince to the Archbishop; “one does n’t do those things himself—he gets others to do them for him; and then, again, we don’t kill actors of Giletti’s stripe—we buy ’em.”

Fabrice had not the least suspicion of what was going on at Parma. The burning question there was, Would or would not the death of that actor who, while living, had pocketed a stipend of thirty-two francs a month result in the downfall of the ultra ministry and its chief, Count Mosca?

On hearing of Giletti’s death, the Prince, vexed by the Duchess’s airs of independence, had instructed the Fiscal General Rassi to treat the whole business as if the defendant were a Liberal. Fabrice, for his part, believed that a man of his rank was above the law; he did not calculate that, in countries where bearers of great names are never punished,

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intrigue is all-powerful, even against them. He often spoke to Ludovic of his entire innocence, which was to be proclaimed without delay; his reason was, forsooth, he was not guilty. Whereon Ludovic said to him one day, "I can't conceive why Your Excellency, a man of parts and education, should take the trouble to say those things to me, his faithful servant. In repeating those protestations to me Your Excellency is needlessly prudent; they are good to tell in public or before a tribunal." "This man believes me a murderer, and loves me none the less," said Fabrice to himself, no little shocked.

Three days after Pépé's departure he was greatly astonished to receive a bulky letter, wound around with silk thread as in Louis XIV's time, and addressed to *His Excellency the Very Reverend Monsignor Fabricio del Dongo, First Grand Vicar of the Diocese of Parma, Canon, etc.*

"Can it be that I am still such a great man?" he laughingly asked. Archbishop Landriani's epistle was a masterpiece of logic and clearness; it comprised no less than nineteen close-filled pages, and gave a detailed account of all the happenings in Parma relative to Giletti's death.

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“A French army marching on the city with Marshal Ney at its head could not have produced more excitement,” said the worthy Archbishop ; “with the exception of the Duchess and myself, my well-loved son, every one believes that you gave yourself the pleasure of killing the mountebank Giletti. Had you gotten yourself into such a scrape, the matter is one of those that are commonly hushed up by a payment of a few hundred louis and a six months’ foreign trip ; but la Raversi is using the incident to overturn Count Mosca. It is not the horrid sin of murder that the public condemns in you, but the want of tact, or rather the bravado, in not employing a *bulo* [a sort of mercenary fire-eater]. I give you in plain terms the talk that I hear on every side, for since that most regrettable affair I make a point of visiting daily the three most frequented houses in the city to say a word in your behalf, and it seems to me that I have never put to better use the little eloquence with which the Lord has seen fit to endow me.”

The scales dropped from Fabrice’s eyes ; the Duchess’s frequent letters, filled as they were with ardent protestations of friendship, did not stoop to give the news of the day. Her

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Grace declared that she would leave Parma forever if he did not soon return triumphant. "The Count," she said in the letter accompanying the Archbishop's, "will do for you all that man can do. As for me, you have quite changed my nature with that pretty prank of yours ; I am become as avaricious as old Trombone the banker ; I have discharged all my mechanics, and I've been going over with the Count the inventory of my fortune, which turns out to be considerably less than I had thought. After the death of the excellent Count Pietranera—whom, by the way, you might as well have avenged instead of exposing yourself to the sword of a fellow like that Giletti—I was left with an income of twelve hundred francs and debts amounting to five thousand ; I remember, among other things, that I had two and a half dozen white satin shoes coming from Paris and just one pair for street wear. I have almost decided to use the three hundred thousand francs that the Duke left me and that I had intended to devote to the erection of a magnificent monument to his memory. To speak of other matters, the Marquise Raversi is your chief enemy, which is equivalent to saying she is mine. If you find the time hang

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heavy on your hands at Bologna, you have but to say the word—I will come and join you there. I inclose four drafts at sight,” etc.

The Duchess did not say a word to Fabrice of the estimation in which his conduct was held at Parma; the object that she always had before her was to cheer and comfort him, and, moreover, it seemed to her that the death of an absurd creature like Giletti ought not to be a matter of serious reproach to a del Dongo. “Think of the Gilettis that our ancestors have dismissed to the other world,” she said to the Count, “and no one ever dreamed of saying a reproachful word against them!”

Fabrice, astounded, and beginning for the first time to dimly discern the true condition of affairs, applied himself to a closer study of the Archbishop's letter. Unfortunately His Grace had believed him to be better informed than he really was. Fabrice saw that one of the principal causes of the Marquise Raversi's triumph was the impossibility of finding the witnesses *de visu* of the fatal duel. The valet who had been the first to bring the sad tidings to Parma was at Sanguigna, in the village tavern, when hostilities broke out; little

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Marietta and the *mamacia* had disappeared, and the Marquise had suborned the vetturino who drove the carriage, and who now perjured himself abominably. "Although the procedure is shrouded in the deepest mystery," wrote the good Archbishop in his best Ciceronian style, "and directed by the Fiscal General Rassi, of whom Christian charity forbids me to speak ill, but who gained wealth and honors by mercilessly prosecuting wretched criminals, with no more bowels of compassion than the hound has for the trembling hare ; although, I say, Rassi, whose venality and turpitude it would be impossible for mortal imagination to exaggerate, has been charged with the direction of the trial by an angry Prince, I have found means to obtain a sight of the vetturino's three depositions. Fortunately it was the will of Heaven that the wretch should contradict himself. And I may add, speaking as I do to my Vicar-general, to him who will succeed me in the direction of the diocese, that I have reprimanded the priest of the parish in which this abandoned sinner has his residence. I will tell you, my son—but this is a secret of the confessional and to be respected accordingly—that this priest learned through the

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vetturino's wife the exact sum with which the Marquise Raversi bribed him ; I will not go so far as to say that she indicated what he was to swear to, but it is more than probable. The transaction was concluded through the medium of a worthless priest who does the Marquise's dirty work, and whom I have been obliged a second time to debar from the sacred functions of the mass. I will not weary you with the recital of the various other steps which I have taken in your behalf and which were only in the line of my duty. A canon, your colleague in the labors of the diocese, who is somewhat puffed up by the great wealth to which by Divine permission he has lately fallen heir, having taken it upon him to state at the house of Count Zurla, the Minister of the Interior, that he considered the case fully proven against you (he was speaking of the murder of the unfortunate Giletti), I summoned him before me, and there, in the presence of my three other vicars-general, my almoner, and two curés who chanced to be present, adjured him to impart to us, his brothers in Christ, his reasons for the judgment he had formed against one of his colleagues of the cathedral. The miserable creature could only mumble some

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unsatisfactory explanations ; every one took sides against him, and although I thought it my duty to say but very little about the matter, he burst into tears and relieved himself by a full confession of the error of his ways ; whereon I, in my own name and for all those who had witnessed the sorry spectacle, promised to keep the matter quiet, on condition, however, that he should faithfully endeavor to remove the erroneous impressions to which his indiscreet utterances during the past two weeks might have given rise.

“I shall say nothing further, my son, of a circumstance that must be well known to you, which is, that of the thirty-four laborers employed by Count Mosca for his excavations, and who the Marquise Raversi asserts were hired by you to assist you in a crime, thirty-two were in the trench and busy with their work when you seized the hunting-knife and used it to defend your life against the man who fell on you without warning. The other two, who were outside the trench, shouted to their companions, ‘The master is being murdered!’ Those words alone are a triumphant vindication of your innocence. Well, the Fiscal General now maintains that those two men have disappeared. More, eight

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of the men who were in the trench have been discovered; at their first examination six of them swore to having heard the cry, 'master is being murdered!' I have learned indirectly that at the fifth hearing, which took place yesterday, five swore that they could not remember whether they actually heard the cry or whether they were told of it subsequently by one of their comrades. I have taken steps to ascertain the dwelling-place of these men, and their priests will let them know that they will be damned eternally if, to earn a few crowns, they falsify the truth."

The good Archbishop was not sparing of his details, as the reader may judge by the samples we have given. He added, employing the Latin language:

"All this business is neither more nor less than an attempt to upset the ministry. If you are convicted your sentence must be death or the galleys, in which case I shall interfere by declaring from my archiepiscopal throne that I know you to be innocent, that you were simply protecting your life against a brigand, and, finally, that I have prohibited you from returning to Parma so long as your enemies are in the ascendant there. I propose also to stigmatize in such terms as

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he deserves the Fiscal General; the hatred for that man is as universal as respect for his character is rare. Finally, on the day previous to that on which the Fiscal pronounces so iniquitous a sentence, the Duchess Sanseverina will leave the city and perhaps the territory of Parma; in that case it may be counted almost a certainty that the Count will resign his charges. The probabilities are that should this happen General Fabio Conti will be raised to the ministry and the Marquise Raversi's triumph will be complete. The weak point of your defense is the lack of a clever man to assume full charge of the proceedings necessary to establish your innocence and thwart our enemies' attempts to suborn witnesses. The Count believes he is doing this, but there are certain tricks of the trade that he is too *grand seigneur* to descend to; moreover, the fact that he is minister of police obliges him in a certain sense to assume an attitude of hostility toward you. Finally, if I may be permitted to say so, our sovereign master believes you are guilty, or at least professes that belief, and is manifesting a feeling the reverse of friendly." (The words corresponding to "our sovereign master" and "professes that belief" were in

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Greek, and Fabrice could have hugged the Archbishop for having written them. He excised that portion of the letter with his penknife and carefully destroyed it.)

During the perusal of this epistle Fabrice found himself obliged to break off more than a dozen times ; he was agitated by transports of the liveliest gratitude. He replied at once with a letter of eight pages. He was frequently obliged to avert his head to keep his tears from blotting the paper. The next morning, while reviewing the letter previous to sealing it, he found its tone too worldly. "I will rewrite it in Latin," he said ; "it will appear more respectful to the worthy Archbishop." But while laboriously constructing long and intricate sentences after the style of Cicero's, he remembered that the Archbishop, speaking of Napoleon one day, had affected to call him Bonaparte ; the emotion that had stirred him so powerfully the night before instantly disappeared. "O King of Italy !" he cried, "that fidelity which so many others swore to thee living I will observe toward thee dead. He loves me, doubtless, but because I am a del Dongo and he a son of the people." That his fine letter in Italian might not be wasted, he made some neces-

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sary changes in it and sent it off to Count Mosca.

That selfsame day Fabrice encountered little Marietta in the street; she blushed with pleasure and signed to him to follow without accosting her. She made for a deserted portico; when safe within its shadow she drew her black lace veil down further over her face so that she might not be recognized, and turning swiftly, said to Fabrice:

“How comes it that you are walking the streets in freedom?” Fabrice told her the story of his recent experiences.

“Good gracious, you don’t tell me you were in Ferrara! Why, I was hunting there for you high and low! I must tell you that I and the old woman had a flare-up; she wanted to take me to Venice, where I knew very well you would never show your face, your name being down in the Austrian black book. I sold my gold necklace to get the price of my fare to Bologna; I had a presentiment that I should find you here—oh, I’m so glad!—and the *mamacia* arrived two days after I did. I sha’n’t ask you to come and see us, for she would be eternally bothering you for money, which makes me feel ashamed. We have existed very comfort-

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ably since that unlucky day that you know of, and have n't spent the fourth of what you gave us. I should n't care to go to the Hotel Pelegrino ; it is too public. See if you can't hire a little chamber in a quiet street, and at the *Ave Maria* [nightfall] I will meet you here in the portico." With these words she turned and fled.





XIII

SOMBER thoughts and serious purposes took wing and vanished with the appearance of this attractive young person ; Fabrice's life at Bologna became one of unalloyed pleasure and profound security. This naïve disposition to be content with what he had in hand for the moment betrayed itself in the letters he wrote the Duchess—so much so that she showed some vexation. Fabrice scarcely noticed it ; he only wrote in shorthand on the dial of his watch : “Mem. : In writing to the D. never to say *when I was prelate, when I was in the Church* ; it irritates her.” He had bought a pair of ponies, in which he found much delight ; he would hire a calèche and put them before it as often as little Marietta expressed a desire to visit some of the picturesque localities in the



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vicinity of Bologna. It became almost a regular habit with them evenings to drive out to the Falls of the Reno. On their return he would stop at the obliging Crescentini's, who thought he had some reason to believe he might be little Marietta's father.

"Faith, if this is the *vie de café* that once seemed to me so unworthy of a man with anything in him, I made a mistake in giving it the go-by," Fabrice thought. He forgot that he had never gone to the café except to read the *Constitutionnel*, and that being a perfect stranger to every one in Bologna, the pleasures of gratified vanity had nothing to do with his present felicity. When he was not in attendance on the little Marietta he might be seen at the observatory, where he was attending a course of lectures on astronomy. The professor had taken a great fancy to him, and Fabrice would lend him his ponies of a Sunday, that he might go with his wife and cut a dash on the Corso de la Montagnola.

He could not endure the thought of making any one miserable, however unlovely that person might be. Marietta had expressly forbidden him to see the old woman, but one day when she was at church he

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climbed the stairs of the *mamacia's* abode, whose face reddened with anger as she beheld him. "Now is the time to assert the del Dongo that is in me," said Fabrice to himself.

"How much does Marietta earn a month when she is playing?" he cried, with the air that a self-respecting young man of Paris assumes when he enters the balcony of the Bouffes.

"Fifty crowns."

"You are lying, as usual; speak the truth or, by the Lord, you shall not have a centime."

"Well, when we had the misfortune to make your acquaintance at Parma she was earning twenty-two crowns; I was earning twelve; and we each gave Giletti, our protector, the third part of what was coming to us. Out of that, pretty nearly every month, Giletti would make Marietta a present; the present might cost a couple of crowns."

"You are lying still; all *you* received was four crowns. I am willing to act the impresario, however, and take you into my employ if you will be kind to Marietta; you shall have twelve crowns for yourself and twenty-two for her every month, but I shall

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cancel the engagement and disband the troupe if I see her with red eyes."

"Big words, big words," the old woman angrily rejoined; "but I can tell you that your generosity will be our ruin; we shall lose the *avviamento* [prestige of being constantly before the public]. When Your Excellency shall no longer deign to accord us your all-powerful protection the troupes will all be full, there will be no place for us, and we shall starve."

"Go to the devil," said Fabrice, rising to go.

"No, I won't, sacrilegious wretch! but I will go to the police and let them know that you are a monsignor recreant to his cloth, and that you have no more right to the name of Joseph Bossi than I have." Fabrice was already part-way down the stairs; he came back.

"In the first place, the police know my real name better than you do; but if you see fit to denounce me, if you are guilty of that baseness," he said in measured terms, "Ludovic shall come and speak with you, and there won't be a whole bone left in your old carcass, and you will have six months' free board and lodging at the hospital, without snuff."

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The old woman's face grew very pale ; she seized Fabrice's hand and tried to kiss it.

"Forgive me ; I did n't mean what I said—I take it all back. I accept with gratitude the generous offer you make Marietta and me. You look so benevolent, you see, I took you for a greenhorn ; and as others are likely to make the same mistake, I would advise you to be less simple in your manners." And she added, with unspeakable impudence : " You will reflect on my words, and as winter is at hand you may as well give Marietta and me a couple of nice warm cloaks ; the fat shop-keeper on St. Petronius's Square has a splendid assortment of English goods."

Fabrice found in pretty Marietta's love all the charm of the tenderest friendship, which made him think of the happiness of the same nature that he might have experienced with the Duchess.

"But is it not odd," he sometimes said to himself, "that I am not susceptible to that engrossing and exclusive affection that men call love ! In all my chance liaisons at Novara or Naples, where is the woman whose company afforded me more pleasure, even at the beginning of our acquaintance, than that I received from mounting a new

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horse for the first time? Can it be," he went on, "that what we call love is only a deception? I love, it is true, as I feel the demands of appetite at six o'clock. Is it from that not very elevated propensity that those liars the poets have evolved the love of an Othello, a Tancred? Or must I believe that my organization is not the same as other men's? Is there a passion common to others wanting to my being? A strange lot that would be!"

At Naples, and more particularly in the later days of his sojourn there, Fabrice had met with women who, proud of their rank, their beauty, and the position in the world of the admirers whom they had sacrificed for his sake, had attempted to assert proprietorship in him. Whenever he saw evidence of such a design the young man had always broken with the fair one with the most scandalous promptness. "Now," he told himself, "if I allow myself to be seduced by the pleasure—doubtless a very exquisite one—of enjoying the favor of the pretty woman known to the world as the Duchess Sanseverina, I shall put myself in exactly the position of the injudicious Frenchman who killed the hen that laid the golden eggs. It

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is to the Duchess that I am indebted for the only happiness that the tenderer sentiments have ever yielded me ; my friendship for her is my life ; and besides, remove her from my existence and what am I ? a poor exile condemned to lead a beggarly life in a dilapidated old castle near Novara. I remember that during the autumnal rains I used to fasten an umbrella to the canopy of my bed to save myself from being drowned overnight. I rode the horses of my father's steward, who put up with it out of respect for my 'blue blood,' but I could see he thought I was outstaying my welcome. My father gave me an allowance of twelve hundred francs, and believed he was endangering his soul's safety by putting bread in the mouth of a Jacobin. My sisters and my poor mother deprived themselves of frocks and finery that I might have the means of making an occasional present to my mistresses ; it humiliated me that I could only be generous at the expense of others. Then, too, people were beginning to suspect my poverty, and the young nobles of the neighborhood were inclined to regard me with a pity akin to contempt. Sooner or later some empty-headed coxcomb would have put a

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slight on the poor and unlucky Jacobin—for that was just what I was in those people's eyes; a meeting would have followed, the result of which would have been an involuntary residence in the fortress of Fenestrella or a compulsory trip to Switzerland, there to live as best I might on my twelve hundred francs a year. I owe it to the Duchess that I have not had to suffer all these calamities; more, it is *she* who manifests for me those transports that *I* should feel for her.

“Instead of that ridiculous and pitiful life which would have reduced me to the condition of a dunce, a melancholy, moping idiot, for the last four years I have been inhabiting a great city and have an excellent turnout at my disposal, owing to which envy and all the debasing sentiments of provincial life have been unknown to me. This generous, too generous, aunt is always reproaching me for not drawing oftener on her banker. Shall I ruin forever this agreeable condition of affairs? Do I wish to lose the only friend I have in the world? To do it I have only to speak an untruth, to say to a charming woman who has not her equal upon earth, and whom I love with the tenderest affection, ‘I love you,’ when I know myself to be

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incapable of loving. She would spend her days and nights in reproaching me with the absence of those transports to which I am a stranger. Marietta, on the other hand, who cannot read my heart, and receives a caress as an utterance from the soul, believes I am extravagantly in love and counts herself the happiest of women.

“The truth is, the only time I was ever near knowing that tender preoccupation that men, I think, call love was when I met young Aniken in the inn at Zonders, near the Belgian frontier.”

It is with regret that at this point we are called on to record one of our hero's most reprehensible actions. In the midst of that tranquil, peaceful life a miserable pique of vanity seized on that heart so refractory to love and led it a merry dance. In those days the people of Bologna were made happy by the presence in their city of the celebrated Fausta F——, admittedly one of the finest singers of her time, and perhaps the most capricious woman that ever lived. Burati, the excellent Venetian poet, has depicted her in the following satiric sonnet, which was then on the lips of princes and chimney-sweeps alike :

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“To blow hot and cold with the same breath, to love and detest in the same day, to be constant only in inconstancy, to condemn what the world adores while the world adores her—all these faults has la Fausta, and many more besides. Look not on the serpent, then ; if thou look on her, imprudent man, thou forgettest her caprices. Listen to her song and thou forgettest thyself, and in the twinkling of an eye love shall transform thee into what Circe of old transformed the companions of Ulysses.”

This paragon of loveliness was at that time under the spell of the luxuriant whiskers and astounding impudence of young Count M——, also noted for his abominably jealous disposition. Fabrice had seen the Count in the streets of Bologna, and was none too well pleased by the insufferable air with which he monopolized the pavement and exhibited his graces to the public. The young man was enormously rich, considered himself a sort of demigod to whom everything was permitted, and, his vagaries having sometimes made him the object of threats, always went attended by eight or ten *buli*, truculent-looking myrmidons dressed in his livery, whom he had brought with him from his estates in the

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neighborhood of Brescia. Fabrice had braved the looks of the terrible Count some two or three times, when chance conducted the former to hear the Fausta. He was astonished by the angelic sweetness of her voice; he had never imagined there could be such a voice; it awoke him to a rapturous sensation of bliss to which his present placid existence was tame and lifeless in comparison. "Can this be love at last?" he said to himself. Desirous of testing the quality of this sentiment, and furthermore tickled by the idea of braving Count M——, whose appearance was more terrific than that of any drum-major, our hero allowed himself the childish pleasure of showing himself much oftener than he ought in front of the Palais Tanari, which the Count had hired for la Fausta's occupation.

One day toward nightfall, Fabrice, while endeavoring to obtain a glimpse of Fausta, was saluted by a volley of laughter whose meaning there was no mistaking, proceeding from the Count's bullies stationed at the gate of the Tanari palace. He hurried home, armed himself, and returned to his station before the palace. Fausta, from her concealment behind the curtains of her window,

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had been watching for his return, and was gratified. M——, jealous of everybody, now concentrated all his jealousy on the head of Joseph Bossi, and indulged in the wildest threats, whereon our hero sent him a daily letter containing these words and nothing more :

“Joseph Bossi, destroyer of noxious insects ; residence, Hotel Pelegrino, Via Largo, No. 79.”

Count M——, accustomed to the respect insured by his immense wealth, his blue blood, and the courage of his thirty manservants, could not be got to understand the tenor of this brief note.

Fabrice wrote other notes to la Fausta. M—— put his spies on the track of this hated and, for all he knew, favored rival ; he first learned what was his real name, and subsequently that there were obstacles which for the time being stood in the way of his return to Parma. A few days later Count M—— left Bologna for Parma, accompanied by his retinue of *buli*, his magnificent horses, and la Fausta.

Fabrice, his interest now thoroughly enlisted, followed them the next day. All in vain were the good Ludovic's pathetic re-

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monstrances; Fabrice told him to mind his business, and Ludovic, himself something of a daredevil, could not help admiring him; besides, the trip would bring him nearer to his pretty mistress at Casal-Maggiore. Owing to Ludovic's caution, eight or ten of Napoleon's old soldiers entered M. Joseph Bossi's service in various capacities. "Only provided," said Fabrice, "that in committing this folly I refrain from all communication with the Minister of Police, Count Mosca, and with the Duchess, no one but myself will be compromised. I will tell my aunt some day that it was a voyage of discovery in quest of love, that pleasant country to which I am a stranger. I think of Fausta a great deal of my time, even when she is not present to my sight—but is it the remembrance of her voice or herself that I am in love with?" Having abandoned all thoughts of the ecclesiastical career, Fabrice had grown side-whiskers and a pair of mustachios that almost rivaled Count M——'s in luxuriance; these ornaments helped to disguise him to some extent. He did not establish his headquarters at Parma—that would have been the height of imprudence—but in a village of the neighborhood hidden among the woods, on the road

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to Sacca, where his aunt's country-place was situated. Following Ludovic's counsels, he gave himself out in the village as the valet and factotum of a very wealthy and eccentric English nobleman, who spent a fortune every year to gratify his love of sport, and would presently arrive from the Lake of Como, where he was recreating himself with trout-fishing. As luck would have it, the charming little villa that Count M—— had hired for la Fausta was also situated on the road to Sacca, in the southern suburb of the city of Parma, and the diva's windows looked out upon the handsome avenues of great trees that are overshadowed by the tall tower of the citadel. Fabrice was unknown in this remote quarter; he had Count M——'s movements closely watched, and one day, just after that gentleman had left the pretty cantatrice's abode, he had the audacity to make his appearance in the street in broad daylight; true, he was armed to the teeth and rode a swift horse. Itinerant musicians—some of those fellows who abound in Italy and are often not devoid of talent—came and planted their double-basses in the ground under the Fausta's windows; when they had preluded they sang, not too badly, a cantata in her

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honor. Fausta came to the window and was rewarded for her pains by the sight of an extremely good-looking young man who, sitting his horse in the middle of the street, first bowed politely and then proceeded to ogle her in a manner there was no mistaking. Notwithstanding Fabrice's ultra-English costume, she had no difficulty in recognizing the author of the impassioned letters that had procured her departure from Bologna. "That is a singular individual," she said to herself; "something tells me that I am going to love him. I am a hundred louis to the good; I can leave that dreadful Count when I see fit. The fact is, he is a boor, without intelligence or amiability; the only amusing thing about him is his gang of horrid bullies."

Fabrice having learned that it was Fausta's custom to drive into the city daily at eleven o'clock to attend mass in that same Church of San Giovanni in which was the tomb of his great-uncle, the Archbishop Ascanio del Dongo, he decided that *his* spiritual welfare also required his presence at eleven-o'clock mass. Ludovic procured for him for the occasion a magnificent English wig, a triumph of the barber's art, the hair of which was of a most beautiful red. Apropos of the color

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of this wig, which was that of the flames that were supposed to be consuming his heart, he composed a sonnet that gave the Fausta much pleasure; it found its way to her piano by some mysterious hand. This guerrilla warfare lasted about a week, but Fabrice saw that in spite of all his efforts he was making no real progress: Fausta refused to receive him. He carried his extravagances to such a length that, as she afterward admitted, she was afraid of him. Fabrice was sustained by a lingering hope of making the acquaintance of the pleasurable but elusive emotion that men call *love*, but he often found it a tedious task.

“Signor,” Ludovic urged on him, “let’s clear out; you are not in love; you are as clear-headed and collected as ever man was. Besides, you are making no headway; for the very shame of the thing let’s pack up and get out.” Fabrice was in one of his dejected, sulky moods, and was about to comply, when he learned that the Fausta was to sing at the Duchess Sanseverina’s. “Perhaps that sublime voice will at last inflame my heart,” he said to himself, and had the temerity to smuggle himself disguised into the palace where there was not a soul that

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did not know him. Conceive the Duchess's amazement when, late in the evening, she beheld a man in the livery of a chasseur standing near the door of the main drawing-room; his appearance reminded her of *some one*. She hurried off to find Count Mosca, who then for the first time apprised her of the egregious follies that Fabrice had been committing in those late days. *He* could bear the matter with equanimity; this love for another than the Duchess suited him exactly. The Count, a perfect gentleman outside of politics, ruled his conduct by the reflection that he could be happy only so long as his mistress was happy. "I will save him from himself," he said to his friend; "think of the delight his arrest in this house would give our enemies! I have within call a hundred devoted followers; it was to have a place to put them that I asked you for the keys of the great tower. He pretends that he is madly in love with the Fausta, and thus far has been unable to take her away from Count M——, who treats the hussy as if she were a queen." The Duchess's countenance betrayed deep chagrin; so, then, after all, her Fabrice was but a heartless libertine, incapable of any tender or serious sentiment! "And not

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to come to see us! that is an unkindness for which I shall never be able to forgive him," she said at last. "And I have been writing to him faithfully every day at Bologna!"

"His reserve is worthy of commendation," replied the Count; "he did not wish to compromise us by his escapade, and we shall have a good laugh when he comes to tell us the story of it."

The Fausta was too much of a rattlepate to keep to herself whatever was occupying her mind; on the morning after the concert, all whose airs had been sung at the tall young man in chasseur livery, she spoke to the Count of a new admirer. "Where did you see him?" roared the infuriated Count. "In the street, at church," Fausta tremblingly replied. Then, repenting her indiscretion and wishing to avert suspicion from Fabrice, she immediately launched out into a rambling description of a tall young man—he was fair, he had red hair and blue eyes; most likely he was some rich Englishman, perhaps he was a prince. At the word "prince" the Count, who seldom stopped to calculate whether a thing was probable or not, took it in his head that his rival was no other than the Crown Prince of Parma—a sup-

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position that tickled his vanity immensely. This poor, forlorn, melancholy young man, surrounded constantly by half a dozen governors, assistant governors, preceptors, and other functionaries who exercised the strictest vigilance over his every motion, was wont to cast sheep's eyes at every passably good-looking woman who came near him. At the concert his rank had entitled him to a seat in the front row of the audience, where from his isolated fauteuil he had ogled the fair songstress in a way that horrified the Count. The idea of having a prince "on her string" was particularly gratifying to Fausta's vanity, and she encouraged it by a hundred details related in the most artless manner imaginable.

"Is n't your family as respectable as that of the Farnese, to which this young man belongs?" she asked the Count.

"What 's that you say? as respectable! I would have you know there are no bastards among *my* ancestors."*

Chance decreed that Count M—— was

* It is a well-known fact that Pietro Luigi, the first sovereign prince in the Farnese family, so celebrated for his talents and virtues, was the natural son of His Holiness Pope Paul III.

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never to have a fair view of this alleged rival, which confirmed him in the flattering belief that he had a prince to contend against; for Fabrice, when the interests of his enterprise did not call him to Parma, spent his time chiefly in the woods about Sacca and on the banks of the Po. The Count was more bumptious, but was also more prudent, now that he believed he had a prince as his rival in the Fausta's affections; he begged her with great earnestness to observe the extremest caution in all her actions. Throwing himself at her feet as a jealous and passionate lover might have done, he declared to her in all seriousness that it concerned his honor that she should not become the dupe of the young Prince.

"Pardon me, but if I loved him I should not be his dupe. I have never had a chance to see how it feels to have a prince at my feet."

"If you listen to him," he replied, with a terrible look, "it may be that I shall not be able to avenge myself on the Prince, but depend on it, I will be avenged," and left the room, slamming the door viciously behind him. Had Fabrice presented himself at that moment he had won his cause.

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“As you value your life,” he said to her that evening as he took leave of her after the performance, “never let me hear that the young Prince has entered your door. I am powerless as regards him, but *morbleu!* don’t forget that I am all-powerful as regards you!”

“Ah, my little Fabrice,” exclaimed Fausta, “if I only knew where to find you!”

Slight the self-esteem of a wealthy young man, one who has been surrounded by flatterers from his cradle, and see what the result will be. The Count’s original and genuine passion for the cantatrice blazed up again in all its pristine fury; he did not recoil even at the prospect of a conflict with the only son of the sovereign in whose dominions he was, while at the same time he had not the sense to watch the Prince, or rather set others to watch him. Had he taken steps to reconnoiter the enemy’s position, Count M—— would have learned that this poor young Prince was never permitted to walk abroad unless accompanied by three or four venerable and stupid guardians whose duty it was to see he did not transgress the rules of etiquette, and that the only pleasure of his choice which was allowed him was the study

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of mineralogy. Night and day the little villa where Fausta dwelt and the élite of Parmesan society assembled was surrounded by spies ; M—— had hourly accounts of what she and her visitors were doing. This much can be said in praise of the manner in which these operations were conducted : the capricious woman had no idea of the increased surveillance to which she was subjected. The reports of his agents advised Count M—— that a very young man wearing a red wig made his appearance frequently under la Fausta's windows, and always in a fresh disguise. "It is evidently the young Prince," said M—— to himself ; "otherwise why should he take the trouble to disguise himself ? *Parbleu !* he shall learn that I am not the man to put up with such nonsense. I should be a sovereign prince myself if it had not been for the usurpations of the Republic of Venice."

By St. Stephen's day the spies' reports had begun to assume a more unpleasant complexion ; they seemed to indicate that Fausta was commencing to reply to the stranger's advances. "I might take the woman and leave the country," reflected M—— ; "but pshaw ! at Bologna I ran away from del Dongo ; shall it be said that I fled from a

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prince at Parma? And what would the young man say? He might think that he had inspired me with fear! And, confound it, I come of as good a family as he." M—— was furious, but did not wish to give Fausta, whose sarcastic tongue he dreaded, the satisfaction of knowing he was jealous. On St. Stephen's day, then, after spending an hour with her and being received with a cordiality which seemed to him the deepest depth of perfidy, he left her about eleven o'clock dressing to attend mass at San Giovanni's. The Count hurried home, donned the threadbare black coat of a young theological student, and hastened to the Church of San Giovanni; there he took his place behind one of the tombs in the third chapel to the right. The tomb was adorned with the statue of a praying cardinal, which shut out the light from the chapel and concealed him pretty effectually, while by peeping out from under the pious prelate's arm he could see what was happening in the body of the church. Presently he saw the Fausta come in, more radiant and handsomer than ever; she was dressed with great elegance, and twenty adorers belonging to the cream of the society of Parma were in her train. A smile of grati-

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fied vanity was in her eyes and on her lips. "It is plain," the poor jealous lover said to himself, "that she is expecting to meet the man she loves, and that she has been unable to see this long time, thanks to my precautions." All at once Fausta's eyes seemed to shine with redoubled luster. "Here comes my rival," said M——, and it was with difficulty he restrained his fury. "What a beastly figure I cut here, serving as pendant to a boy prince in disguise!" But try as he might, he could see nothing of the rival whom his hungry looks sought in every portion of the church.

At every moment Fausta would cast her eyes about the church and invariably bring them back, overflowing with love and happiness, to the obscure corner where M—— was concealed. In an inflamed condition of the heart love is prone to exaggerate trivial circumstances and to deduce from them all sorts of absurd consequences; what did poor M—— do but persuade himself that Fausta had seen him and, having become aware of his insane jealousy in spite of his efforts to conceal it, was reproaching him with it and at the same time trying to console him with those looks of tenderness!

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The cardinal's tomb behind which M—— had placed himself in observation was raised some four or five feet above the marble pavement of San Giovanni's. When at about one o'clock the mass was finished most of the faithful went their ways, and Fausta dismissed her admirers, alleging an intention to protract further her devotions. Kneeling in her place, her eyes, now more ardent and tender than ever, were fixed steadily on M——; now that there were so few persons in the church, she no longer took the trouble to cast her glances around it before resting them in ecstasy on the statue of the cardinal. "What delicacy!" said the Count, thinking himself the loadstone of those looks. At last Fausta rose and quickly left the edifice, making as she went unaccountable movements and passes with her hands.

M——, beside himself with love and joy and almost cured of his jealousy, was leaving his place to fly to his mistress's abode and thank her for her goodness, when, as he passed around in front of the cardinal's tomb, he had nearly fallen over a young man dressed all in black. This funereal-looking individual had been kneeling against the front or church side of the monument, and the pavement of

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the church being lower than the floor of the chapel, the jealous lover's glances had passed over his head and he had remained unseen.

The young man rose, walked rapidly toward the door, and almost instantly, as if by magic, was surrounded by some seven or eight loutish-looking, unprepossessing persons who seemed to belong to him. M—— hurried after him; but while he could not say that there was a premeditated effort to impede his progress, he was jostled and delayed in the narrow passage inclosed by the wooden outer doors by the raffish-looking crowd that formed his rival's body-guard. When finally, bringing up the rear of the procession, he reached the street, all he saw was a shabby carriage drawn by a spanking pair of horses disappearing rapidly in the distance.

He returned to his house breathing fire and fury. Presently came his spies, who phlegmatically reported that the mysterious lover, disguised as a priest, had that day visited the Church of San Giovanni, where he had kneeled most devoutly at the foot of a monument situated at the entrance of a dark chapel. Fausta had remained in the church until it was almost deserted, when she had rapidly

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exchanged signals with the stranger, making strange passes and gestures with her hands. M—— rushed off to the faithless one's villa. For the first time she was unable entirely to dissemble her agitation; she told him, with the well-feigned artlessness of a woman in love, that she had gone to San Giovanni's that day as usual, but had seen nothing of the man who had been persecuting her. Thereon M——, losing all control of himself, abused her in most outrageous terms, told her what he had seen with his own eyes, and, the impudence of her lies increasing with the vehemence of his denunciations, drew his poniard and "went for" her. With perfect coolness Fausta said to him:

"Well, the matters you are making such a fuss about are all perfectly true, but I have tried to keep them from you in order that your jealousy might not lead you into senseless schemes of vengeance that would prove the ruin of us both; for you should know once for all that, as I conjectured, the person who has been persecuting me with his attentions is not of a rank to be defied with safety, in this country at least." After adroitly intimating that, after all, M—— was not her master, the Fausta wound up by giving him

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a partial promise to stay away from San Giovanni's in the future. M—— was madly in love; the young woman had the address to temper her prudence with a little cajolery; his anger was disarmed. He thought he would leave Parma; the young Prince, powerful as he was, would not be able to follow him, or if he did would be no more than an equal. But his pride again told him that an abrupt departure would be taken for a flight, and the Count decided to let the project drop.

“He has no suspicion of my little Fabrice's presence here,” the cantatrice gleefully assured herself, “and now we shall be able to fool him nicely!”

Fabrice had no notion that his happiness was so near at hand. Finding the next morning his charmer's windows tightly closed, and failing to catch a glimpse of her anywhere, he began to ask himself if he were not carrying his pleasantry too far. His conscience also troubled him. “In what kind of box am I placing that poor Count Mosca, and he minister of police! it will be said he is my accomplice, and my escapade will be the means of ruining him! And then what will the Duchess say, when I come to tell her of my investigations in the domain of love, if

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I have to own up to abandoning a pursuit to which I had devoted so much time and trouble?"

More than half inclined to relinquish the pursuit, he was moralizing thus one evening, strolling the while under the great trees that grew between Fausta's villa and the citadel, when he became aware that he was being watched by a spy of remarkably small proportions. In vain he sought to throw his persecutor off the scent by doubling and turning through various streets and passages; the diminutive being was always at his heels. Losing patience at last, he turned into a lonely street that skirted the river Parma, and in which his men were stationed in ambush. At a sign from him they fell on the poor little spy, who dropped on her knees before them; it was Bettina, Fausta's confidential maid. After three weary days of enforced seclusion, disguised in man's attire the easier to escape the poniard of Count M——, of whom she and her mistress were in mortal terror, the girl had stolen out to come and tell Fabrice that "some one" loved him to distraction and was dying to see him, but that the aforesaid some one would be unable to revisit the Church of San Giovanni. "She

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is just in time," said our hero to himself; "so much for sticking to one's purpose!"

The little maid was extremely pretty—a circumstance that made Fabrice forget his moral reflections. She told him that the promenade and all the streets through which he had passed that evening were closely guarded by M——'s invisible bullies. They had hired rooms in the abutting houses, where, hidden behind the window-curtains and maintaining perfect silence, they could see everything that happened and hear all that was said in the quiet street.

"If they had recognized my voice," said Bettina, "I should certainly have been murdered on my return home, and probably my poor mistress with me."

She appeared charming in her terror to Fabrice's eyes.

"Count M—— is furious," she continued, "and madame knows that he is capable of anything. She bade me tell you that she wishes she were with you a hundred leagues from here!"

Fabrice conducted pretty Bettina to a little apartment that he had not far away. He told her that he was from Turin and the son of an illustrious personage who happened to

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be in Parma just then, which obliged him to be very circumspect in his movements. Bettina laughed and told him he was a much more important gentleman than he chose to appear. It was some time before our hero could get it through his head that the charming girl took him for no less a personage than the Crown Prince himself. When Fausta's fears began to trouble her, and her love for Fabrice assumed more definite form, she had dropped his name in conversation with her attendant, and substituted the Prince's. Fabrice finally confessed to the pretty girl that she had guessed aright. "But if my name gets noised abroad," he added, "notwithstanding the passion of which I have given your mistress such abundant proof, I shall be able to see her no more, and my father's ministers—those infernal rascals whom I mean to turn out neck and crop some day—will certainly send her orders to leave the country of which she is such an ornament."

Along toward morning Fabrice and the little lady's-maid put their heads together and devised several plans for insuring a meeting with la Fausta. He sent for Ludovic and another long-headed servant of his, who held a council of war with Bettina, while

he dashed off a most extravagant letter to Fausta; the circumstances warranted a resort to the theatrical, and Fabrice was equal to the occasion. It was not until daybreak that he parted from the young woman, who was apparently well satisfied with the Prince's behavior.

It had been specified with great exactness that now that Fausta and her lover had reached an agreement, the latter was not to show himself under the windows of the villa until such time as everything should be prepared for his reception there, and then a signal was to be displayed. But Fabrice, in love with Bettina, and believing the dénouement of his affair with Fausta close at hand, found it impossible to remain quietly in his village quarters two leagues from Parma. About midnight of the following day he rode over with a numerous following to sing under Fausta's windows an air that was then the vogue, and of which he had changed the words. "That's the proper thing for a lover to do, is n't it?" he gaily said.

Now that Fausta had consented to an interview, Fabrice could not see the reason of all this delay and tomfoolery. "No, I am not in love," he said to himself as he sang,

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not very melodiously, under the windows of the villa ; “ Bettina is a hundred times more pleasing to me than la Fausta ; it is to her arms I wish I might fly this minute.” Our hero, in no very cheerful humor, was retiring to his village, when, at a quarter of a mile’s distance from Fausta’s villa, he was suddenly attacked by a score of men ; four of them seized his horse by the bridle while two others pinioned his arms. Ludovic and Fabrice’s *bravi* ran away after firing a few pistol-shots. It was all the affair of a moment ; in the twinkling of an eye, as if by enchantment, fifty torches in the hands of as many armed men were blazing in the street. Fabrice had jumped from his horse in spite of the restraining efforts of his captors ; he laid about him stoutly, and wounded one of the men, who held his arm in a clasp like that of a vise. Great was his astonishment when this man spoke up in terms of the deepest respect, saying :

“ Your Highness will settle a nice little pension on me for this wound, and that will be a great deal more agreeable to me than to incur the guilt of high treason by drawing my sword against my Prince.”

“ The penalty of my folly has overtaken

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me," said Fabrice to himself; "I shall be damned for a sin for which I had no inclination."

The little skirmish was hardly ended when half a dozen lackeys in gala livery came upon the scene with a sedan-chair garishly painted and gilded — one of those fantastic affairs employed by masqueraders at carnival-time. Six men, poniard in hand, begged "His Highness" to step into the vehicle, alleging that the night air might prove injurious to his voice. The utmost deference was observed; the words "Prince" and "Your Highness" were continually in the fellows' mouths. The procession put itself in motion; Fabrice counted more than fifty men along the way bearing lighted torches. It was perhaps one o'clock in the morning; the white-garbed, night-capped denizens of the locality appeared at their windows, gazing wonderingly; the proceedings were conducted with perfect gravity and decorum. "I was afraid Count M—— was going to let me have a taste of his fellows' poniards," Fabrice mentally remarked; "it seems he is content to make me ridiculous; I had not given him credit for so much delicacy. But does he really think he is dealing with the Prince? for if

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he knows that I am only little Fabrice, look out!"

The fifty torch-bearers and the twenty armed men remained for a while under Fausta's windows, then formed in procession and proceeded to march through the city, arranging their route so as to pass the houses of the principal citizens. From time to time two majordomos, one at each window of the sedan-chair, inquired of His Highness if he had any commands for them. Fabrice did not allow himself to be disconcerted; he could see by the light of the torches that Ludovic and his men were keeping as near to the cortège as they dared, and said to himself, "It would be madness for Ludovic to attempt anything with his eight or ten men." He saw from the windows of his chair that the perpetrators of the practical joke were all armed to the teeth. He affected a jovial air with his guardians the two majordomos. After this triumphal parade had lasted more than two hours, he saw that they were about entering the street in which the Sanseverina mansion was situated.

Just as they were turning the corner of the street he flung open the door in the front of the chair and leaped out over one of the

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staves, felling with his dagger a tall footman who raised his torch to his face ; he received a cut from a dagger in the shoulder, and had his hair and beard singed by a torch in the hands of a second footman, but fought his way through his enemies to Ludovic, to whom he bawled, "Kill ! Kill every torch-bearer !" Ludovic laid about him with his sword and delivered him from the two men who were hottest in pursuit. Fabrice made good use of his legs and reached the gate of the Sanseverina palace ; the porter had opened the little wicket cut in the great door and was staring with stupid curiosity at the unwonted scene. Our hero plunged like a diver through the low entrance-way and pulled the gate to after him ; he scampered through the garden at breakneck speed, and made his escape by a door that opened on a deserted street. In an hour's time he was outside the city, and by daylight had passed the frontier of the States of Modena and was safe. That evening he entered Bologna. "A brilliant ending to my expedition," he said to himself ; "I did not even succeed in speaking to my fair one." The first thing he did was to send off explanatory letters to the Count and the Duchess, which, while faithfully de-

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picting all that was passing in his heart, were so framed as to give no information to an enemy. "I was in love with love," he said to the Duchess; "I did my level best to form acquaintance with it, but nature seems to have denied me the faculty of loving and being sentimental; the farthest height to which I can raise myself is vulgar pleasure," etc.

The excitement that the incident gave rise to in Parma was unprecedented. The mystery in which the affair was shrouded inflamed men's curiosity; innumerable people had seen the torch-light procession and the sedan-chair, but who was the abducted man, toward whom such ceremonious respect had been observed? There was no person of note missing in the city on the following day.

The tradesmen and mechanics living in the street where the prisoner had effected his escape declared that a man had been killed; but when it became light and the people ventured to emerge from their houses, they could discover no further traces of the conflict than some blood upon the pavements. The spot was visited during the day by over twenty thousand sight-seers. Italian cities are accustomed to strange sights, but as a general

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thing they know the why and wherefore of them ; what shocked the sensibilities of Parma in the present case was that even so long as a month afterward, and when the torch-light parade had ceased to be the sole subject of conversation, no one, thanks to Count Mosca's precautions, had guessed the name of the rival who had attempted to rob Count M—— of his mistress. That jealous and revengeful lover had made off at the beginning of the night's proceedings. The Fausta was given free quarters in the citadel by order of Count Mosca. The Duchess laughed not a little at this bit of injustice into which the Count was betrayed in order to stifle the curiosity of the Prince, who might otherwise have stumbled on Fabrice's name.

There was in Parma at that time a literary character from the North who was engaged on a history of the Middle Ages ; he was desirous of consulting the archives in the library, and the Count had assisted him as far as was in his power. But this savant, who was still a young man, was of an extremely touchy and pugnacious disposition ; he believed, among other things, that he was not treated with proper respect at Parma. It is true that the street urchins sometimes

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pursued him with their attentions on account of a mop of flaming red hair that was his delight and pride. Another of his fancied grievances was that he was overcharged at his inn; and he would never pay for the veriest trifle until he had looked up its price in the *Travels* of a Mrs. Stark, a book that has reached a twentieth edition because it tells the prudent Englishman what he should pay for a turkey, an apple, a glass of milk, etc.

On that same evening when Fabrice had taken his involuntary promenade the savant with the red thatch had given way to his angry passions at the inn and pulled from his pockets a pair of pop-gun pistols to revenge himself on the waitress for having charged him two sous for a doubtful peach. He was arrested, for it is counted a crime in Parma to carry pop-gun pistols.

As our irascible author was tall and thin, it occurred to the Count the next morning to palm him off on the Prince as the over-zealous lover who, having attempted to carry off Count M——'s mistress, had been made the victim of a practical joke for his pains. At Parma the penalty for carrying concealed weapons is three years in the galleys, but it

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is seldom enforced. After two weeks' imprisonment, during which the savant's only visitor was a lawyer who scared him half to death by expounding to him the severity of the laws applicable to his case, a second lawyer obtained access to the prisoner and told him of the nocturnal promenade given by Count M—— to a rival of whose name he was ignorant. "The police do not like to confess to the Prince that they have been unable to learn that rival's name. Admit that you were trying to make yourself agreeable to Fausta, that you were singing beneath her windows, that fifty ruffians fell on you, forced you into a sedan-chair, and for two hours rode you around the city, treating you with perfect consideration and politeness. You do not humiliate yourself by telling the story; a few words are all that will be necessary. As soon as you shall have spoken them, thereby relieving the police of their embarrassment, you will be put into a post-chaise and driven to the frontier, where we will take leave of you with our affectionate regards."

For a month the savant held out against these blandishments; two or three times the Prince was on the point of having him up

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before the Minister of the Interior and presiding at the inquiry. He gave up the idea, however, when the historian, completely wearied out, determined to confess everything and was conducted to the frontier. The Prince was ever after firm in his belief that Count M——'s rival had a forest of red hair.

Three days after the memorable evening of the promenade, as Fabrice, in hiding at Bologna, was devising with the faithful Ludovic ways and means for getting on the track of Count M——, he learned that *he* too was in hiding, in a village among the mountains on the road to Florence. The Count had only three of his henchmen with him. The next morning, on his return from riding, he was waylaid and abducted by eight masked men who represented themselves to be minions of the law from Parma. His eyes were bandaged and he was conducted to an inn two leagues farther up among the mountains, where he received every attention and found a plentiful supper waiting for him. He was served with the choicest wines of Spain and Italy.

"Am I a prisoner of state?" asked the Count.

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“Not a bit of it,” Ludovic replied, with great politeness, from behind his mask. “A private gentleman considers he has cause of quarrel with you, because you had him ridden in a sedan-chair; he desires to meet you in single combat to-morrow morning. If you kill him you will be supplied with horses and money, and will find the necessary relays at the post-houses between here and Genoa.”

“What is the name of this fire-eater?” the Count angrily inquired.

“His name is Bombacio. You will have the choice of weapons, and loyal witnesses will be provided, but one of the two must die!”

“It is to be a murder, then?” said the Count, with signs of terror.

“Fie! fie! what language! It is simply a duel to the death with a young man upon whom you played a scurvy trick, and who regards the insult as one that can only be washed out with blood. For one of you there is not room on earth, so do your best to kill him; you will have small swords, pistols, and sabers—all the weapons we could get together at such short notice, for we were pressed for time; the police of Bologna are active and vigilant, as you doubtless are aware, and we could not

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afford to have them interfere with a duel demanded by the honor of a man whom you insulted."

"But if the young man is a prince—"

"He is a private individual like yourself, and, I may add, not nearly as rich as you are; but he means to fight to the death, and I warn you that he means to make you fight."

"I am afraid of nobody or nothing under the sun!" screamed M——.

"Your adversary will be pleased to know that," Ludovic coldly replied. "To-morrow morning early be prepared to defend your life; it will be sought by one who has every reason to be angry and will show you no mercy. I say again you have the choice of weapons—and you will do well to make your will."

About six o'clock of the following morning Count M—— was served with breakfast; then the door of the chamber in which he had been detained was unlocked, and he was requested to pass out into the courtyard of the inn. The court was inclosed by walls and hedges of considerable height, and all the exits were carefully barred and bolted.

In a corner stood a table which the Count was invited to approach; he found on it a

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bottle of wine and one of brandy, two pistols, two small swords, two sabers, and ink, pens, and paper. A score of peasants were at the windows that overlooked the court. The Count appealed to their compassion: "They are going to murder me—protect me!"

"You deceive yourself or are trying to deceive others," calmly said Fabrice, who was at the opposite corner of the courtyard beside another table, on which were more weapons. He had laid aside his coat, and his face was protected by one of those wire masks that fencers use. "Put on your mask," he added, "and make your selection—sword or pistols, as you will; as you were told yesterday, the choice of weapons rests with you."

Count M—— raised objections without number, and seemed to have no stomach for the fray. Fabrice, for his part, feared the interference of the police, although they were high up in the mountains and five good leagues from Bologna. He ended by hurling at his adversary a choice selection of the most opprobrious epithets, and at last had the satisfaction of exciting the dudgeon of the Count, who grasped a sword and came forward to the scratch. The combat opened with little spirit.

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It had proceeded only a few minutes when a great uproar brought it to a standstill. Our hero had been well aware that he was engaging in an action which might be to him for a lifetime a source of reproach, or at all events of calumnious insinuation. He had despatched Ludovic to the neighboring farms and hamlets to drum up witnesses. Ludovic gave money to some men who were working in a near-by wood ; they came on the ground uttering blood-curdling cries, thinking they were to kill an enemy of the man whose money they had received. On arriving at the inn Ludovic bade them watch with all their eyes and see that neither of the young men who were fighting took unfair advantage of the other.

The combat, for a moment interrupted by the appalling yells of the peasants, was slow in being renewed. Fabrice was again compelled to rouse the Count by insults. "Master Count," he cried, "when one is insolent he should at least be brave. I know that is hard on you ; it suits you better to pay others for being brave." The Count, his dander rising again, replied that he had long been a pupil of Baltistin, the famous master-at-arms of Naples, and would make him repent his im-

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pudence. He fought with considerable spirit for a while now that his anger was aroused, but all to no purpose ; for Fabrice lodged the point of his sword among his ribs, inflicting a very pretty wound that sent him to bed for some months. Ludovic, bending over him to examine his hurt, whispered in his ear, "If you give this duel away to the police I will see that you are stabbed in your bed."

Fabrice retreated to Florence, where a collection of the Duchess's reproachful letters was forwarded to him from Bologna; she could not forgive him for being present at her concert and never speaking to her. Fabrice was delighted with Count Mosca's letters; they breathed a spirit of generous friendship and were replete with the most noble sentiments. He comprehended that the Count had written to him at Bologna in order to divert any suspicion that might rest on him in reference to the duel. The authorities acted with great fairness; their report stated that two travelers, only one of whom (the wounded man) had been identified, had fought with swords in the presence of thirty peasants, whose numbers toward the conclusion of the conflict had been increased by the parish priest, who had made fruitless efforts

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to part the combatants. As Joseph Bossi's name was not mentioned, Fabrice, something less than two months subsequently, ventured to return to Bologna, more firmly convinced than ever that he was fated never to know love in its more elevated and intellectual aspect. He was at pains to explain this to the Duchess at great length ; he was weary of his solitary life, and looked back regretfully to the pleasant evenings he had been wont to spend in the Count's and his aunt's society. They were his last experience of refined association.

“I am so sick and tired of the whole business,” he wrote to the Duchess, “that if la Fausta were to intimate to me that I still enjoyed her favor I would not go ten leagues to see if she told the truth ; so you need have no fear, as you tell me you have, of my going to Paris, where I see that she is singing to overflowing houses. I would travel I can't tell how many leagues to spend one evening with you and the dear Count who treats his friends so kindly.”





XIV

WHILE Fabrice, in a village near Parma, was busy with his love-chase, Rassi, the fiscal general, who was not aware of his proximity, was pressing his trial as if he had been a Liberal; the witnesses for the defense were never to be found, or, if they were found, were shamelessly intimidated; and at last, after the proceedings had dragged along for upward of a year, and about two months after Fabrice's last return to Bologna, on a certain Friday the Marquise Raversi, beside herself with joy, publicly announced in her salon that the verdict which had just been given against the little del Dongo would on the following day be presented to the Prince and receive his signature. The Duchess was acquainted with her enemy's statement a few minutes after it was uttered.

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“The Count must have very inefficient servants!” she said to herself. “Only this morning he told me he thought it would be a week before the verdict could possibly be rendered. Perhaps he would n’t be altogether sorry to see my young Grand Vicar removed from Parma; but never mind,” she added, “he ’ll come back, and will be our Archbishop some of these days.” She touched her bell.

“Assemble the servants in the antechamber,” she said to her footman, “even to the cooks; go to the commandant of the city and obtain his permit to travel post; and, finally, see that my landau is ready with four horses within half an hour.” All the women of the household were called on to help pack the trunks, and the Duchess hastily assumed a traveling costume—all without a word of advice asked from the Count; it pleased her to show him that she could be independent when she chose.

“My friends,” she said to the assembled domestics, “I learn that my poor nephew has been found guilty *in contumaciam* of the crime of defending his life against a murderer—for Giletti’s intention was to kill him. Every one of you knows what a gentle and harmless na-

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ture was Fabrice's. Because I am unwilling tamely to endure this atrocious injustice I am about to leave for Florence. I have directed my steward to pay each of you his wages for ten years ; if you are unfortunate write to me, and as long as I have a sequin in my purse part of it shall be yours."

The Duchess was perfectly in earnest in what she said, and the servants burst into tears as she concluded ; her eyes, too, showed traces of moisture. She added, in a voice of deep emotion : "Pray for me and for Monsignor Fabrice del Dongo, first Vicar-general of the diocese, who to-morrow will be sentenced to the galleys or, to what will be preferable, death."

The servants' tears flowed afresh, and their sobs gave way to cries and execrations that lacked little of being seditious. The Duchess took her seat in her carriage and directed the coachman to drive to the palace of the Prince. Notwithstanding the unseasonableness of the hour, she sent in a request for an audience through General Fontana, the aide-de-camp on duty. She was not in court-dress, which threw the gallant officer into a condition of stupefaction. As for the Prince, he was not surprised and still less

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was he displeased by the lady's application for an audience. "We shall see tears shed by handsome eyes," he said, rubbing his hands. "She comes to sue; the haughty beauty is about to strike her colors at last! It is well—she has been a little too insupportable of late with her confounded airs of independence. Those speaking eyes always seemed to say, when anything did not suit her, 'Naples or Milan would be much more agreeable places to live in than your stupid little city of Parma.' Well, it is true that I don't reign in Naples or Milan, but this fine lady has come to ask me for something that it rests with me to give or withhold and that she is burning to have; I always thought that the presence of that nephew of hers would be to my advantage in some way."

While the Prince was smiling at these reflections and abandoning himself to all these agreeable forecasts, he was walking up and down his study, at the door of which stood General Fontana, straight and stiff as a ramrod. Seeing the Prince's sparkling eyes and remembering the Duchess's traveling costume, he thought that nothing less than the dissolution of the monarchy was at hand. When the Prince said to him, "Tell the Duch-

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ess to wait a short quarter of an hour," his amazement exceeded all bounds. The General accomplished his "about face" with the precision of a soldier on parade. The Prince indulged in another smile. "Fontana is not accustomed," he said to himself, "to see the proud Duchess made to wait; the astonished face with which he will speak to her of that *short quarter of an hour* will pave the way for the tears whose flow these walls will shortly witness." Those fifteen minutes were to the Prince a delicious period; he paced his study with a firm and stately tread; *he reigned*. "I must be careful to say nothing that is not perfectly in place; whatever my personal sentiments toward the Duchess may be, I must not forget that she is one of the greatest ladies of my court. How would Louis XIV have spoken to the princesses his daughters when he wished to manifest his displeasure?" and his eyes wandered to the portrait of the Great King.

It was an odd circumstance that it never occurred to the Prince to ask himself whether or not he should pardon Fabrice or commute his sentence. At last, at the expiration of twenty minutes, the faithful Fontana again presented himself at the door, but without

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speaking. "Let the Duchess Sanseverina enter," said the Prince, in dramatic tones. "Now for the tears," he said to himself, and as if in preparation for the spectacle drew his handkerchief from his pocket.

Never had the Duchess appeared prettier or more graceful and supple in her movements; no one would have taken her for more than twenty-five. Her little feet scarcely seemed to touch the floor as she floated rather than walked across the room. The poor aide-de-camp felt his reason tottering on its throne.

"I have need of great indulgence from Your Most Serene Highness," she began, in her fresh, pleasant little voice; "I have taken the liberty of appearing in attire that I know is not quite the thing; but Your Highness has so spoiled me with kindness in the past that I venture to hope I may be forgiven on this occasion also."

The Duchess had spoken rather slowly in order to give herself time to enjoy the expression of the Prince's face; his present profound astonishment, together with the remains of his previous posturings as evinced in the attitude of his head and arms, made that expression a delicious spectacle. He

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stood as if a thunderbolt had suddenly descended on his head; from time to time he gasped, almost inarticulately, in his high and disagreeable voice, "*What! what!*" The Duchess, when she had finished her little introductory speech, paused respectfully to give him time to answer, then added:

"I trust that Your Most Serene Highness will condescend to overlook the inappropriateness of my attire;" but in saying these words her mocking eyes danced so with suppressed merriment that the Prince could not sustain their brilliancy and directed his gaze upon the ceiling, a certain sign with him of extreme embarrassment.

"What! what!" he repeated, then fortunately found his tongue. "Pray be seated, Duchess," he said, with a pretty good grace, pushing forward a fauteuil with his own hands. The Duchess was not insensible to the politeness, and moderated the irony of her glances.

"What! what!" the Prince again exclaimed, shifting about uneasily in his chair, which somehow seemed to afford him less comfort than usual.

"I am going to avail myself of the coolness

of the night to do a little posting," said the Duchess, "and as I shall probably be away for quite a while I did not feel like leaving His Most Serene Highness's dominions without thanking him for all the favors he has conferred on me during the last five years." At these words the Prince saw it all; no one could suffer more than he at seeing himself mistaken in his forecasts; then he assumed an air of dignity altogether worthy of the portrait of Louis XIV that was regarding him from the wall. "Come now, that's better," said the Duchess to herself; "it's more like a man."

"And what is the cause of this sudden departure?" the Prince asked, pretty firmly.

"I have had the project in my head for some time past, and now my departure is hastened by a gross wrong done Monsignor del Dongo, who to-morrow will be sentenced to death or to the galleys."

"Where do you propose going?"

"To Naples, I think." And rising from her chair she added: "All that remains for me to do is to take leave of Your Highness and tender my thanks for all your *former* kindnesses." The Prince saw from the decision with which she spoke that in two

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seconds all would be over; the final step once taken, he knew that any arrangement would be impossible; she was not a woman to back down from her determination. He hastened after her.

“ You know, Duchess,” he said, seizing her hand, “ that I have always esteemed you, and that my friendship for you might, if you would, have been known by a different name. It is an undeniable fact that a murder has been committed; I intrusted the conduct of the trial to my most reliable judges— ”

At these words the Duchess drew herself up to her full height; every appearance of respect and even of civility vanished in an instant; it was the outraged woman who stood there, confronting the man whom she knew to be despicable and false. An expression of righteous indignation and profound contempt played over her features as she said to the Prince, accentuating her every word :

“ I am leaving Your Highness’s dominions forever in order that I may never again hear mentioned the names of the Fiscal Rassi and the other infamous judges, murderers of my nephew and so many other innocent persons ; if Your Highness would not embitter my last

moments at the court of a prince who, when not misled, is distinguished for his urbanity and intelligence, I most humbly beseech Your Highness to say nothing further to remind me of those scoundrels who are to be bought for a title or a sum of money."

The Prince was startled by the accent of truth and sincerity with which these words were uttered; he feared for a moment that his dignity was about to be compromised by a still more direct accusation, but on the whole his predominant sensation was one of pleasure. He admired the Duchess; in the glow and warmth of her invective her beauty approached the sublime. "Heavens, how handsome she is!" the Prince reflected. "Much may be forgiven to such a woman, whose like, perhaps, is not to be found in all Italy.—And with a little good management, who knows but that some day she might become my mistress? There is an enormous difference between her and a doll like that Marquise Balbi, who year in and year out contrives to filch at least three hundred thousand francs from my poor subjects.—But did I hear aright? I think she said, 'murdered my nephew and so many other innocent persons.'" Then his angry feelings

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asserted themselves, and it was with an icy dignity worthy of his rank that, after a pause, he asked, "And what would madame require of us as a condition to changing her determination?"

"Something that you are not capable of granting," replied the Duchess, in a tone of keenest irony and ill-concealed contempt.

The Prince was beside himself; but his training as a diplomatist and ruler of men stood him in good stead, and he mastered his first impulse. "I must possess this woman," he said to himself; "I owe it to myself to possess her, that I may afterward crush her with my scorn. If she leaves this room I shall never see her again." But, beside himself with rage and hate as he was at that moment, where was he to find words that should at the same time satisfy his offended dignity and induce the Duchess not to desert his court? "She can't ridicule my movements to her friends," he said to himself, and went and took his post between the Duchess and the door of the study. Almost at the same instant there came a faint tapping at the door.

"Who is the infernal idiot that comes here to inflict his odious company on me?"

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he roared at the top of his voice. Poor General Fontana introduced his pale and dismayed face and faintly gasped, "His Excellency Count Mosca solicits the honor of an interview."

"Show him in," the Prince shouted, and to Mosca in the act of performing his salutations: "Well, here is Her Grace of Sanseverina, who declares she is going to leave us to take up her abode at Naples, and who, moreover, has been ventilating her impertinence at our expense."

"What!" exclaimed Mosca, very pale.

"Do you mean to say that you knew nothing of her proposed departure?"

"Not the first word; when I left madame at six o'clock she seemed satisfied and in the best of spirits."

His words produced an immediate effect upon the Prince. First he looked inquiringly at Mosca; his increasing pallor showed that he had spoken the truth and was not the Duchess's accomplice in her sudden freak. "That being the case," the sovereign reflected, "I am about to lose her forever; pleasure and vengeance alike take wing and desert me. At Naples she and her nephew Fabricio will make epigrams on the mighty

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wrath of the little Prince of Parma." He looked at the Duchess. Supreme contempt and bitterest hatred seemed to be disputing possession of her heart; her eyes were just then fixed on Count Mosca, and the corners of the pretty mouth were drawn down in an expression of deepest disdain. "Base courtier!" was what every line of the charming face seemed to say. "So," thought the Prince, after watching her a moment, "I can no longer count on that means of keeping her in the country. If she steps across the threshold of this study now she is lost to me. The Lord knows what she will say of my judges at Naples—and with her cleverness and the persuasive powers that Heaven has gifted her with, every one will be certain to believe her. I shall owe to her the reputation of a silly tyrant, who rises at all hours of the night to search for conspirators underneath his bed." By an adroit manœuvre, as if seeking to walk off his agitation, the Prince again posted himself before the study door. The Count was on his right, three paces distant, pale, unnerved, and trembling so violently that he was obliged to support himself on the back of the fauteuil that the Duchess had occupied at the begin-

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ning of the interview and which the Prince in his wrath had kicked aside. The Count's passion still survived. "If the Duchess goes, I shall follow her," he said to himself; "but the question is, Will she have me in her suite?"

On the Prince's left stood the Duchess, her arms folded across her bosom, eyeing him with growing impatience and disgust; the bright hues which but now had lent animation to her glorious face had been succeeded by a dull, deep pallor.

The Prince was unlike his two companions in that his face was very red and his manner uneasy and perturbed; his left hand kept trifling fitfully with the cross suspended from the cordon of his order that he wore beneath his coat; with the right he stroked his chin.

"What am I to do?" he said to the Count, scarcely aware of what he was doing, and yielding to his habit of consulting his minister on every point.

"Truly, Your Highness, I cannot for the life of me say," replied the Count, with the air of a man about to give up the ghost. He could scarcely enunciate his words. His manner was a balm poured on the Prince's

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offended vanity, the first comfort he had met with ; and in his gratification he happily hit on an expedient that might be the means of saving the situation.

“Well,” he said, “I am going to show you that I am the most sensible person of us three. I am willing to forget absolutely my position in the world. I am going to speak to you *as a friend*,” and he added, with a fine condescending smile evolved from his memories of the happy days of the *Grand Monarque*, “*as a friend speaking with friends*. Madame la Duchesse, what must we do to make you reconsider a hasty determination ?”

“Truly, I am at a loss to say,” replied the Duchess, with a deep sigh—“I am at a loss to say, such is my loathing and detestation for Parma.” There was no epigram intended ; it was plain that she spoke in all sincerity.

The Count turned toward her impatiently ; the instinct of the courtier was shocked in him ; then he addressed the Prince a look of entreaty. With much dignity and self-possession the latter was silent for a moment, then turning to the Count :

“I see,” he said, “that your charming friend is quite beside herself ; it is no more

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than natural—she adores her nephew.” And addressing the Duchess, he added, with a languishing look, modulating his words after the fashion of one quoting a line from a play, “And to find favor in the goddess’s eyes, what must poor mortal do?”

The Duchess had had time to reflect; in firm and measured tones, like an envoy stating his ultimatum, she replied:

“Your Highness should write me a gracious letter, such as Your Highness so well knows how to write; in it you should say that, entertaining doubts as to the guilt of Fabrice del Dongo, the Archbishop’s first Vicar-general, you will not approve the sentence when it is presented for your signature, and, further, that these iniquitous proceedings shall be dropped and never revived in the future.”

“*Iniquitous!*” exclaimed the Prince, reddening up to the whites of his eyes, his anger getting the better of him again.

“That is not all,” rejoined the Duchess, with the haughtiness of a Roman conqueror; “*this very evening*—it is now a quarter past eleven,” she added, looking at the clock—“this very evening Your Serene Highness will write a note to the Marquise Raversi,

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advising her to seek the retirement of her country-seat and there recuperate from the fatigues of a certain trial that she was discussing in her salon not very long ago." The Prince strode up and down the apartment like a man bereft of reason.

"Was ever such a woman seen before?" he shouted. "She has not the least respect for me."

"It is certainly not my intention to be disrespectful to Your Serene Highness," the Duchess sweetly replied; "you were so kind as to say that it was your wish to talk to us *as a friend to friends*. Moreover, I have not the slightest wish to remain in Parma," she added, casting a look of ineffable contempt at the Count. That look decided the matter for the Prince, who had hitherto been wavering, although his words seemed to indicate an intention of yielding; but words were of little value in his eyes.

There were a few words more exchanged, but the upshot was that the Count received instructions to write the letter in the terms prescribed by the Duchess. He omitted the sentence *these iniquitous proceedings shall be dropped*. "It is enough," he said to himself, "that the Prince promises to withhold his

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signature from the sentence." The Prince gave him a grateful look as he signed the paper.

In this the Count made a great mistake; the Prince was tired of the business and would have put his name to anything. He thought he was getting out of his scrape on very good terms, and the situation, in his eyes, was summed up in these words: "If the Duchess deserts us, before the week is out the court will be dull as ditch-water." The Count noticed that the master changed the date of the letter, substituting for the original one twenty-four hours later. He looked at the clock; it was nearly midnight. All the Minister saw in the correction was the sovereign's pedantic attention to petty minutiae of detail. As for the Marquise Raversi's banishment, it passed unchallenged; it afforded the Prince an especial pleasure to banish people.

"General Fontana!" he cried, throwing open the door.

The General appeared, with a face so brimful of astonishment and curiosity that an amused look passed between the Duchess and the Count; that look was the means of restoring peace between them.

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“Fontana,” said the Prince, “you will take my carriage, which is standing under the colonnade, drive to the Marquise Raversi’s palace, and send in your name. If she is in bed you will cause her to be notified that you are there on my behalf, and on reaching her bedroom will say, in these very words and in no other: ‘Madame la Marquise Raversi, it is His Most Serene Highness’s pleasure that you depart to-morrow morning, before eight o’clock, for your château of Velleja. His Highness will inform you when you may return to Parma.’”

The Prince’s eyes sought the Duchess’s, who, without stopping to give him the thanks he was looking for, dropped him a ceremonious courtesy and passed rapidly from the room.

“What a woman!” said the Prince, turning to Count Mosca.

The latter, delighted with Mme. Raversi’s banishment, which would remove innumerable difficulties from his path, discoursed for a full half-hour like a consummate courtier; his purpose was to smooth the ruffled plume of the sovereign’s self-esteem, and he did not leave him until he saw that he was convinced that the secret history of Louis

XIV had no brighter page than that which he had just furnished to the future annalist.

On returning to her home the Duchess gave orders to close the doors and admit no one, not even the Count. She wished to be alone, that she might reflect without interruption on the occurrences of the evening. She had acted on the impulse of the moment and solely with a view to her present gratification, but whatever course she had adopted she would have adhered to unflinchingly. She would not have reproached herself on returning to her soberer self, still less would she have repented. Such were some of the distinguishing traits of character to which, at the age of thirty-six, she owed it that she was still the handsomest woman of the court.

She was meditating on the attractions that life in Parma had to offer her, as she might have done on her return from a long journey, so strong had been her conviction between nine and eleven o'clock that she was about to quit the country never to return.

“What a lugubrious face the poor Count put on when the Prince told him of my proposed departure!—Never mind, he is a most excellent man, and with a heart as good as gold. He would have left all his offices and

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dignities to follow me. But then it is to be remembered that in five long years he has not had a single distraction to reproach me with ; how many women married at the altar could look their lord and master in the face and say as much ? It is true he is not conceited or pedantic ; there are men whom it affords women pleasure to deceive. He is not one of that description ; in my presence he seems almost to be ashamed of his power and influence. What a droll figure he cut beside his sovereign lord ! If he were here I would give him a good hug. But nothing in the world shall ever tempt me to try to amuse a minister who has lost his portfolio ; it is a malady for which there is no remedy but death. What a misfortune it must be for a young man to be minister ! I must write to him on this subject ; it is a matter that he ought to be informed about from headquarters before quarreling with his Prince.— But I am forgetting my faithful servants.”

She rang. Her women were still occupied with their packing, the traveling carriage had been run out under the portico, where it was receiving its freight of trunks, and around it stood all those tearful members of the household who had no work to do. Chékina, who

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alone had access to the Duchess on occasions like the present, informed her of these details.

"Send them up here," said the Duchess. After a few moments she betook herself to the antechamber.

"I have received assurance," she said to them, "that my nephew's sentence shall not be approved by the sovereign; I have therefore put off my departure. We shall see if my enemies' influence is strong enough to induce a change of resolution in His Highness."

There was silence for a moment, after which all the servants began to clap their hands and set up a mighty shout: "Long live Madame the Duchess!" The Duchess, who had retired to the adjoining room, returned like an actress at the plaudits of her audience, made a pretty little courtesy, and said, "My friends, I thank you." So great was their enthusiasm that, had she said the word, they would have marched then and there on the palace and attacked it. She made a sign to a postilion, an old and tried servant who had once been a smuggler; the man followed her from the room.

"Assume the dress of a well-to-do peasant, leave the city as best you can, hire a *sediola*,

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and make your way to Bologna as quickly as possible. You will enter Bologna by the Florence gate. Chékina will hand you a package, which you will give to Monsignor Fabricio, who is staying at the Pelegrino. My nephew is in hiding and is known in Bologna by the name of Joseph Bossi. Be careful that you do not betray him by inadvertence; pretend that you have no acquaintance with him; my enemies will doubtless have their spies on your track. Fabrice will send you back here in the course of a few hours or days; it is in returning that you will have to use all your address not to betray him."

"Ah, those fellows of the Marquise Raversi!" cried the postilion; "we are ready for them; they would soon be wiped out if madame would only say the word."

"The time will come, perhaps; but, on your head, do nothing without my orders."

What the Duchess was desirous of sending to Fabrice was a copy of the Prince's letter; she thought the story would amuse him, and added a few words descriptive of the scene that had resulted in the writing of the letter; the few words expanded into a letter of ten pages. She sent for the postilion again.

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“You cannot start before the opening of the gates, at four o’clock.”

“I was thinking of getting out through the great sewer; the water is chin-high, but I could manage it.”

“No, no,” said the Duchess, “I won’t have one of my most faithful servants expose himself to the risk of contracting fever. Do you know any one in the Archbishop’s household?”

“The second coachman is my friend.”

“Here is a letter for His Grace. Effect your entrance into the palace noiselessly, and contrive to obtain speech of the first *valet de chambre*; I would not have monsignor’s slumbers disturbed. In case he has retired to his chamber, spend the night in the palace, and, as it is the custom there to rise with the lark, to-morrow morning at four o’clock send in your name as coming from me, ask the holy prelate for his blessing, give him this package, and take any letters that he may give you for Bologna.”

The Duchess had inclosed for the Archbishop the original of the Prince’s letter; as it concerned his Grand Vicar, she requested him to deposit it among the archives of the diocese, where she hoped that the canons and

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other grand vicars, her nephew's colleagues, would take cognizance of it, always under the seal of strictest secrecy.

The Duchess wrote to Monsignor Landriani with a familiarity that must have charmed the worthy but low-born man; her signature alone filled three lines; her most friendly letter ended with these words: *Angelina Cornelia Isola Valserra del Dongo, Duchess Sanseverina.*

"I don't remember having written so much," said the Duchess, laughing to herself, "since my marriage contract with the poor old Duke; but that is the only way of getting on with such people, and in the eyes of the bourgeois caricature is beautiful." She could not go to bed without writing a letter to give the poor Count something to think of. She told him, officially, she said, and for his guidance in his dealings with crowned heads, that she felt it was not in her to amuse a minister out of place. "The Prince inspires you with fear; when you shall have ceased to see him will it be I to whom you will look to frighten you?" She sent this letter off to its destination immediately.

On the following morning, at the early hour of seven, the Prince sent for Count

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Zurla, the Minister of the Interior. "I desire you to issue fresh and more stringent orders to all the podestats," he said to him, "looking to the arrest of the Signor Fabrice del Dongo. I am told that he may have the impudence to enter our dominions again. The fugitive being at Bologna, where he can snap his fingers at the decrees of our courts, it is my wish that officers of justice who know him personally be stationed as follows : in the different villages on the road from Bologna to Parma, in the vicinity of the Duchess Sanseverina's country-place at Sacca and of her house at Castelnovo, and about Count Mosca's château. I shall depend on your zeal and fidelity, Count, to conceal these orders of your sovereign from the penetration of Count Mosca. Know once for all that I desire the arrest of the person whose name I mentioned."

The Minister had no more than left the room than a secret door admitted Rassi, the Fiscal General, who came forward bowing and cringing like the base slave he was. The rascal's face would have been a study for a painter ; it did full justice to the infamy of his rôle ; and while the rapid and shifty movement of his eyes betrayed an

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abundant consciousness of his own merit, the arrogant and grimacing assurance of the mouth showed that he was steeled against contempt.

As this person will exert a potent influence on our hero's destiny, a few words about him may not be amiss. He was tall, of commanding presence, and had handsome, penetrating eyes, but his face was disfigured by the small-pox. As for intelligence, he possessed it in abundance and of the highest quality; it was everywhere admitted that in legal attainments he had no superior; but it was by his readiness and resourcefulness that he outshone all others. He would take up a case and argue it for either plaintiff or defendant, and such was his fertility of resource that whichever side he espoused was certain, in spite of evidence, to obtain a verdict. He might have been called the king of pettifoggers.

This person, with acquirements which made his master an object of envy to neighboring governments, had one consuming passion, which was to hobnob on terms of equality with exalted personages and amuse them by his buffooneries. It mattered little to him whether the great man laughed at

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him or with him, or cracked dubious jokes at the expense of Mme. Rassi; provided he succeeded in raising a laugh and was treated with familiarity he was satisfied. Sometimes the Prince, at a loss how otherwise to abase the dignity of his Chief Justice, would kick him; if the kicks hurt he would begin to cry. But so strong was the buffoon instinct in him that he frequented the drawing-rooms of the ministers in preference to his own salon, where he exercised despotic sway over the most eminent lawyers of the country. Rassi had created for himself an exceptional position, in that it was impossible for the most insolent noble to humiliate him. His manner of avenging the affronts that he was constantly receiving was to relate them to the Prince, whose ear was always open to listen to his tale of woe. True, all he got for his pains was often a cuff, conscientiously administered, that brought tears to his eyes; but he did not mind a little thing like that. The presence of the illustrious jurist was a distraction to the Prince in his moments of ill humor, when he would divert himself by badgering him. It will be seen that Rassi was very nearly the ideal courtier—a man without honor and without self-respect.

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“I want perfect secrecy observed in this affair!” shouted the Prince, ordinarily so polite, with no word of salutation, addressing his distinguished visitor as if he had been a tramp. “What date does your sentence bear?”

“Your Serene Highness, yesterday morning.”

“How many judges signed it?”

“The entire number—five.”

“And the penalty?”

“Twenty years in the fortress, in accordance with Your Serene Highness’s commands.”

“The people would have murmured had it been death,” said the Prince, as if speaking to himself; “it is a pity! What an effect it would have produced on that woman! But the name del Dongo is revered in Parma on account of the three archbishops in the family.—You said twenty years?”

“Yes, Your Serene Highness,” replied the Fiscal, continuing to stand and bowing servilely. “He is further to make public profession of repentance before Your Highness’s portrait, and is condemned to a diet of bread and water on Fridays and on the eve of all the great church festivals, *the criminal being*

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a notoriously impious person. We inserted these provisions to disgrace him and destroy his prospects in the future.”

“Sit down and write,” said the Prince. “Are you ready? ‘Whereas His Serene Highness has seen fit in the clemency of his heart to listen to the appeals and supplications of the Marquise del Dongo, mother, and the Duchess Sanseverina, aunt, of the criminal, who allege in their petition that at the time of the offense their son and nephew was very young, and, moreover, was infatuated by an insane love for the wife of the unfortunate Giletti, now, therefore, be it known that His Serene Highness has been graciously pleased to commute the sentence of Fabricio del Dongo to twelve years’ imprisonment in the fortress of Parma.’”

The Prince signed the paper and dated it as of the day previous ; then, handing it back to Rassi, he said to him, “Write immediately under my signature: ‘The Duchess Sanseverina having again appealed to His Highness’s mercy, the Prince directs that on every Thursday the prisoner be allowed to walk for one hour on the platform of the square tower, known commonly as the Farnèse Tower.’”

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“Sign that,” said the Prince, “and see that you keep your mouth closed, no matter what talk you hear in the city. Tell Councilor Capitani, who voted for two years’ imprisonment and advocated his absurd opinion in a speech, that I recommend him to study the laws and ordinances. Once more, silence, and good-morning.” The Fiscal made three profound reverences, to which the Prince paid no attention.

These things occurred at seven o’clock in the morning. A few hours later the Marquise Raversi’s banishment was being discussed in all the cafés and public resorts of the city ; the momentous event was in everybody’s mouth. Ennui, that relentless enemy of little cities and little courts, was driven from Parma for a time. General Fabio Conti, who had flattered himself that he was as good as minister, alleged an attack of gout and for several days did not leave his fortress. The shopkeepers, and after them the common people, inferred from what was going on that the Prince had resolved to make Mgr. del Dongo Archbishop of Parma. The omniscient coffee-house politicians went so far as to declare that Father Landriani had been prevailed on to feign illness and tender his resignation ; they had

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heard he was to receive a handsome pension from the proceeds of the tobacco tax. This rumor came to the ears of the Archbishop, who was seriously alarmed, and for some days his zeal in our hero's cause was sensibly chilled. Two months later this startling intelligence appeared in the Paris newspapers, with the slight modification that it was Count Mosca, nephew to the Duchess Sanseverina, who was to be made archbishop.

Meanwhile the Marquise Raversi was raging like a caged lioness in her château at Velleja; she was not one of those meek women who are content to say a few spiteful things of their enemy and consider the quarrel ended. On the day succeeding her disgrace the Chevalier Riscara and three other friends of hers, in pursuance of orders received from her, presented themselves before the Prince and solicited permission to visit her at her château. His Highness received the gentlemen graciously, and their arrival at Velleja was a comfort to the Marquise. Before the end of the second week she had thirty persons in her house, all aspirants for positions in the new ministry. Every evening the Marquise convened the best informed of her adherents in solemn council. One night, hav-

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ing received a heavy mail from Parma and Bologna, she retired earlier than usual. Her confidential woman introduced to her chamber, first, the titular lover, Count Baldi, an insignificant young man with a handsome face, and shortly afterward his immediate predecessor, the Chevalier Riscara. The latter was a small and unlovely man, both as to his physical and moral nature, who, having begun his career as tutor of geometry at the College of Parma, was now a member of the Council of State and chevalier of several orders.

“I have always made it a rule,” said the Marquise to these two men, “never to destroy a paper, and you can see what a good rule it is: here are nine letters addressed to me by la Sanseverina on different occasions. I wish you both to start at once for Genoa, where you will try to find among the *galériens* a former notary named Burati, or Durati. Sit down at my desk, Baldi, and write what I shall dictate to you.

“I have an idea, and write you these few words. I am going for a few days to my cottage near Castelnovo; if you can come and spend twelve hours there I shall be very glad to see you. After what has happened

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I don't think you will incur much risk ; the clouds seem to be rolling by. Still, it will be as well for you to observe caution in entering Castelnovo. You will find one of my men on the lookout for you along the road ; you know they are all devoted to you. You will retain your name of Bossi, of course, for this little trip. I hear you are bearded like a pandoor or a Capuchin friar, while we at Parma never saw you save with the respectable face of a grand vicar.'

"Do you understand, Riscara?"

"Perfectly ; but the trip to Genoa is an unnecessary expense ; I know a man here in Parma who, while he is not in the galleys yet, gives promise of getting there very soon. He will imitate la Sanseverina's writing so you could n't tell the counterfeit from the original."

What he heard made Count Baldi open his handsome eyes ; he was just beginning to understand.

"If you know this exemplary citizen of Parma to whose advancement in life you are looking forward," said Mme. Raversi to Riscara, "it is manifest that he must know you too ; his mistress, his confessor, his friend may be in the pay of la Sanseverina. I pre-

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fer spending a little more time and money to running any risks. Be a couple of good little lambs, then ; start at once for Genoa, keep yourselves dark there, and hurry back." Chevalier Riscara ran laughing from the room, imitating Punch's waddling gait, and crying in his squeaking voice, "Come, get your bundles ready ;" he wished to leave Baldi alone with the lady. Five days later the Chevalier restored to the Marquise her lover, minus a goodly portion of his cuticle ; he had been induced to climb a mountain on mule-back in order to save six leagues' distance, and swore that his travels were ended for the rest of his natural life. Baldi gave the Marquise three copies of the letter that she had dictated, and five or six others in the same chirography composed by Riscara, which it was thought might prove serviceable in the future. One of them contained some choice allusions to the Prince's nocturnal terrors, while another was devoted to the deplorable leanness of his mistress, the Marquise Balbi, who, it was said, always left the imprint of a pair of tongs on the cushion of a chair in which she had sat for a moment. Any one would have sworn that all these letters were in Mme. Sanseverina's writing.

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“Now I know beyond a doubt,” said the Marquise, “that the bosom friend, the beloved Fabrice, is at Bologna or in that vicinity—”

“I am too ill,” cried Count Baldi, interrupting; “in mercy, I entreat you, don’t send me on another journey—at least, not for a few days, until I have had time to regain my health.”

“I will speak in your behalf,” said Riscara. He rose and whispered in the Marquise’s ear.

“Very well, so be it; I consent,” she replied, with a smile.—“Calm your fears, you need not go,” said she to Baldi, somewhat contemptuously.

“Oh, thank you!” cried the latter, in heartfelt accents. So it happened that Riscara departed alone in the post-chaise. He had not been in Bologna two days before his eyes were gratified with the sight of Fabrice and little Marietta taking an airing in a calèche. “The devil!” he said to himself; “our future Archbishop does n’t seem to stand on ceremony. The Duchess must be informed of this—it will please her.” Riscara had only to follow Fabrice to learn the place of his abode. The next morning the latter received by messenger the letter of Genoese manufacture; it seemed to him rather short, but he

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suspected nothing. The idea of seeing the Duchess and the Count delighted him beyond expression, and in spite of all that Ludovic could say he hired a horse and was off like a shot. He was not aware that he was followed at a short distance by the Chevalier Riscara, who, on reaching the last post-house before Castelnovo, six leagues from Parma, had the pleasure to behold a great gathering of people in the public square, before the prison, within whose portals our hero had just disappeared, having been recognized and arrested as he was changing horses by two tipstaves selected and despatched by Count Zurla.

The Chevalier's small eyes twinkled with gratification. He took infinite pains to ascertain all that had happened in the little village, which done he at once sent off a courier to the Marquise Raversi. After that he devoted his time to strolling about the streets, inspecting the quaint old church, and searching for a picture by Parmeggiano that he had been told was extant in the neighborhood, until at last he fell in with the podestate, who hastened to do the honors of the place to a Councilor of State. Riscara expressed astonishment that he had not at once sent off to the cita-

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del of Parma the conspirator who had fortunately been arrested in his bailiwick.

“There is reason to fear,” Riscara added, “that his many friends, who were on the lookout day before yesterday to assist him in his passage through His Highness’s territory, may encounter the gendarmes; the rebels were well mounted and twelve or fifteen in number.”

“*Intelligenti pauca!*” exclaimed the podestà, with an air of profound sagacity.







XV

TWO hours later poor Fabrice, handcuffed and chained to the seat of the *sediola*, was on his way to Parma, escorted by eight gendarmes. These had orders to reinforce their numbers with all the gendarmes stationed in the villages through which they were to pass; the podestate himself had considered it his duty to accompany so important a prisoner. About seven o'clock in the evening the *sediola*, with an escort of thirty gendarmes and all the ragamuffins of Parma, crossed the handsome boulevard, passed the little villa that a few months previously had had la Fausta as its tenant, and at last drew up before the outer gate of the citadel, just as General Fabio Conti and his daughter were about going for their drive. The Governor's carriage came to a halt before it reached the

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drawbridge in order to leave room for Fabrice's *sediola* to pass. The General immediately gave orders to close all the gates, and hurriedly alighted to see what it was all about. He was not a little surprised when he recognized the prisoner, who, owing to his being chained down for so long a period, was so stiff that he could not move; it required four gendarmes to lift him down and carry him into the office of the clerk. "So," muttered the vain old Governor, "I am to have as my guest that famous Fabrice del Dongo about whom the upper ten of Parma have been raising such a fuss of late!"

The General had met him at court, at the Duchess's receptions, and elsewhere more than twenty times, but he studiously refrained from recognizing him; he had no desire to compromise himself.

"You will draw up," he said to the clerk of the prison, "a very careful report of all the circumstances attending the delivery of the prisoner by the worthy podestate of Castelnovo."

Barbone, the clerk, a terrible person at the best of times by reason of his great beard and martial aspect, assumed a more ferocious air than usual; he might have passed for a Ger-

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man jailer. Believing that it was owing to the Duchess Sanseverina that his master, the Governor, had failed in his designs on the ministry, he was more than usually insolent toward the prisoner; he called him *voi* in addressing him, which is in Italy the form reserved for addressing servants.

"I am a prelate of the holy Roman Church," Fabrice quietly but firmly said, "and Grand Vicar of this diocese; my birth and station entitle me to be treated with respect."

"I know nothing about that," the clerk impertinently rejoined. "Prove your assertions by showing your titles to those very respectable positions." Fabrice, of course, had no titles and made no answer. General Conti stood beside his clerk and watched him write without once raising his eyes to the prisoner, in order that he might not be forced to say that he was really Fabrice del Dongo.

All at once Clelia Conti, who had remained in the carriage, heard a tremendous uproar in the guard-room. Barbone, the clerk, when he had filled up a long and extremely uncivil description of the prisoner's person, had ordered him to remove his clothing and show the number and condition of the wounds inflicted by Giletti.

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"I cannot do it," Fabrice replied, with a bitter smile; "these handcuffs will not allow me to obey your orders."

"How's that!" exclaimed the General, with an air of innocent surprise; "a prisoner in handcuffs! in the interior of the fortress! That is contrary to the regulations unless specially ordered. Take off the bracelets."

Fabrice looked at him. "What a sly old fox it is!" he thought. "He knows very well that I have been wearing the confounded things all the afternoon, and that they hurt abominably, and he plays the innocent!"

The gendarmes removed the handcuffs. It had just come to the honest fellows' ears that Fabrice was nephew to the Duchess Sanseverina, and they began to manifest toward him an obsequious politeness that contrasted with the boorishness of the clerk. This did not seem to please the latter, who said roughly to Fabrice:

"Come now, look sharp; show us those scratches that you received from poor Giletti before you murdered him." Fabrice bounded over the rail and landed his fist on the clerk's nose to such good purpose that the latter tumbled off his chair and fell against the General's legs. The gendarmes seized Fabrice.

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The General and two gendarmes who were standing near picked up the clerk, whose nose was bleeding copiously. Two other guards in a remote quarter of the room ran and closed the door to defeat any attempt to escape on the prisoner's part. The corporal of the guard did not think that the young man would make any very desperate break for liberty now he was safely housed inside the citadel; still, partly from a soldier's instinct, partly with an idea to prevent disorder, he went and took his station by the window. Opposite this window and only a few feet away stood the General's carriage. Clelia had leaned back in the corner against the cushions in order not to witness the dismal scenes that were passing in the office; on hearing the commotion she looked out to see what was going on.

"What is the matter?" she said to the corporal.

"It is young Fabrice del Dongo, miss, who has just given that lout Barbone an awful thump."

"What! is the Signor del Dongo a prisoner?"

"*Eh!* so it seems," replied the corporal.
"It is all on account of the poor young man's

birth that they are making such a fuss over him ; I thought the signorina knew." Clelia's eyes remained fixed on the window ; when the gendarmes surrounding the table moved aside a little she caught a glimpse of the captive. "Who would have thought," she reflected, "when I first met him on the road to Como, that I should see him next in these distressing circumstances ? He gave me his hand to help me into his mother's carriage—even then, young as he was, he was in the Duchess's company. I wonder had they begun to love each other then ?"

The reader should know that in the Liberal party, whose leaders were the Marquise Raversi and General Conti, it was taken for granted that a liaison existed between Fabrice and the Duchess. Count Mosca, who was detested by that faction, was everlastingly lampooned for his blindness.

"So," said Clelia, "he is a prisoner, in the hands of his enemies ! for Count Mosca, angel though people call him, cannot but be gratified by his captivity."

Shouts of laughter were heard proceeding from the guard-room.

"Jacopo," she said to the corporal, in an unsteady voice, "what is it now ?"

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“The General asked the prisoner why he struck Barbone. Monsignor Fabrice replied, ‘He called me a murderer; let him show his warrant for applying that epithet to me;’ then the men all laughed.”

A turnkey who had mastered the art of writing took Barbone’s place. The latter emerged from the office, wiping with his handkerchief the blood from his repulsive face; he was swearing like a trooper. “D—n that Fabrice!” he bawled; “he shall die by no other hand than mine. I will rob the hangman of his victim,” etc. He halted between the office window and the General’s carriage for another look at Fabrice, and his language became fouler than ever.

“Come, go about your business,” said the corporal; “I won’t have you swear like that in presence of the young lady here.”

Barbone raised his head to look into the carriage, and his eyes and Clelia’s met. The girl gave utterance to a cry of horror; she had never witnessed an expression of such malignant hatred. “He will kill Fabrice!” she said to herself. “I must speak to Don Cesare.” Don Cesare was her uncle, and one of the most exemplary priests of the city; his brother, General Conti, had obtained for

him the position of steward and chaplain to the prison.

The General took his place in the carriage.

"Will you go back home," he said to his daughter, "or will you wait for me in the courtyard of the palace? I shall likely be detained; I shall have to render a full account of these matters to His Highness."

Fabrice was just coming from the office, guarded by three gendarmes who were conducting him to the cell that had been allotted him. Clelia looked out through her window; the prisoner was very near. At that moment she answered her father's question in these words, "*I will go with you.*" Fabrice, hearing the words uttered almost at his ear, looked up and encountered the young girl's glance. He was struck by the melancholy expression of her face. "How pretty she has grown," he thought, "since that time we met near Como! What an angelic face! what purity, what intelligence! People compare her to the Duchess; they are right, she can stand it." Barbone, who had had a purpose in stationing himself near the carriage, halted the gendarmes who were guarding Fabrice, and, passing around the rear of the vehicle so as

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to reach the window beside which the General was seated :

“As the prisoner has been guilty of violence and insubordination within the precincts of the citadel,” he said, “might it not be well to enforce article No. 157 of the regulations and clap the handcuffs on him for three days ?”

“Go to the devil !” shouted the General, for whom the affair had several embarrassing considerations. In the first place, he did not wish to carry things with too high a hand with the Duchess and Count Mosca ; and then, too, in what light would the Prince be likely to view the matter ? — for in reality the murder of a Giletti was an affair of exceedingly small importance, and it was entirely owing to intrigue that it had assumed its present proportions.

During this brief dialogue, Fabrice, surrounded by his guards, was superb ; his mien and bearing were lordly in their loftiness and nobility ; his delicate, clean-cut features and the disdainful smile that played on his lips were in pleasing contrast with the loutish appearance of the gendarmes. But that was, so to speak, but the outer husk, the external garment of his expression ; the light

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from within shone from his eyes, which rested with rapture on Clelia's celestial beauty. To her, buried in her reflections, it had not occurred to withdraw her head from the window. He bowed respectfully with a faint smile, and presently :

"It seems to me, signorina," he said, "that I had the pleasure of meeting you once before, near a lake, and there were gendarmes present then also."

Clelia blushed and was so troubled that she could not reply. "How gallantly he bears himself among those coarse men!" she was saying to herself when Fabrice spoke to her. Her profound pity, the feeling almost of tenderness that overcame her, so disturbed her thoughts that she could not muster up a word of answer; she was conscious of her silence and blushed more deeply still. At that moment the bolts of the great gate of the citadel were shot back with a resounding clang; His Excellency's carriage might not be kept waiting longer. The echoes so filled the vaulted passage with their reverberations that, even had Clelia found her tongue, Fabrice could not have heard her words.

While being whirled away by the horses, which had broken into a gallop immediately

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after crossing the drawbridge, Clelia said to herself, "He must have thought me a very stupid person!—and not only stupid, but bad-hearted," she added, almost in the same breath; "he must have thought I did not return his bow because he was a prisoner and I the Governor's daughter."

The thought produced a feeling of despair in the young girl's generous heart. "What makes my behavior completely indefensible," she continued, "is that when we met before, for the first time—and there were gendarmes there then also, as he said—it was I who was a prisoner and it was he who came to my assistance and extricated me from a serious difficulty. Yes, there's no denying it; my conduct was abominable—a compound of rudeness and ingratitude. Alas, poor young man! now that he is in trouble every one will feel at liberty to turn the back on him. He said to me then, 'Do you think you will remember my name at Parma?' How he must despise me now! It would have cost so little to speak a word of kindness to him! Oh, I know he thinks me a wretched, heartless creature! If he had not that day so generously offered the use of his mother's carriage I should have had to trudge through

the dust after the gendarmes, or, what would have been worse, get up and ride *en croupe* behind one of those horrid men ; my father was arrested then and I without a protector. Yes, my behavior is all of a piece—it speaks for itself. And how keenly a man of his nature must have felt it ! What nobility ! what serenity ! How like a hero he looked, surrounded by his puny foes ! I understand now the Duchess's love for him ; if he is what he is now in the midst of peril and adversity, what must he be in the sunshine of love and happiness ! ”

The Governor's carriage remained standing more than an hour in the courtyard of the palace, and yet, when the General came down the steps after his interview with the Prince, it did not seem to Clelia that he had been absent so very long.

“What did His Highness say ?” she asked.

“His lips said prison, but his looks said death.”

“Merciful God, death !” cried Clelia.

“Hold your tongue, will you !” said the General, testily. “I am a simpleton to answer the questions of a child.”

Meanwhile Fabrice was toiling his way up

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the three hundred and eighty steps that led to the Farnèse Tower, a prison recently constructed on the platform of the great tower at an enormous height above the ground. He did not once think—consciously, that is—of the great change that had come over his existence. “Those glances!” he said to himself; “the things they said! the pity that was in them! They seemed to say, ‘Be not cast down overmuch by the trials through which you are passing. This life is but a vale of tears—were we not all born into the world to sup with sorrow?’ And her beautiful eyes, how they remained fixed on me, even when the horses dashed through the resounding archway!”

Clelia accompanied her father in his round of visits among the salons. It was early in the evening, and no one had as yet heard of the arrest of the *noble convict*—for that was the designation applied by the courtiers two hours later to the poor imprudent young man.

It was noticed that Clelia’s face was more animated that evening than usual. As a general thing her expression was a little too deficient in animation; she showed too little interest in what was going on around her.

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In comparing her attractions with the Duchess's, as was often done, it was this air of being moved by nothing, of looking down on everything, that inclined the balance in favor of her rival. In England or in France, countries where vanity predominates, the verdict would probably have been different. Clelia Conti, with her tall and graceful form, might have posed as a model for Guido's charming figures. We will not deny that, in accordance with the canons of Grecian beauty, her features were a trifle too strongly marked; the lips, for instance, with their gracious curves, were somewhat fuller than they need have been.

The face, radiant with the celestial graces of a refined and noble mind, was remarkable for this: though rarely and exquisitely beautiful, it in no respect resembled the creations of the Greek sculptors. The Duchess, on the other hand, possessed, perhaps in rather too high a degree, the familiar beauty of the ideal, and her face, Lombard in its every feature, reminded one of the voluptuous smile and tender melancholy of Leonardo da Vinci's magnificent *Hérodiades*. Just as the Duchess was sparkling, overflowing with wit and mischief, ready to throw herself heart and

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soul into the topic of the moment, so Clelia, either from disdain of her surroundings or regret for some vanished dream, was calm and hard to move. It had long been believed that she would end by embracing a religious life. When she was twenty years old she had manifested repugnance to attending balls, and if she accompanied her father to these entertainments it was only from a desire not to injure his ambitious projects.

“I wonder,” the General often said in his vulgar soul, “Heaven having given me as daughter the most beautiful and most virtuous young person in all His Highness’s dominions, whether I am always going to be unable to use her for my advancement! I am alone, I have but her in the world; what I require is an alliance with some powerful family that will bring to my support other great families and render my position unsailable. Well, what happens? As soon as some young man of standing at the court comes forward to pay his addresses this handsome, good, and pious daughter of mine begins to pout and show ill temper. When the young man is dismissed she emerges from her sulks and becomes comparatively cheerful, and so continues until another suitor

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appears upon the scene. Count Baldi, the handsomest man of the court, presented himself and failed to please. He was succeeded by the Marquis Crescenzi, the richest man of His Highness's dominions; she declared she should certainly be miserable with him."

"There 's not a doubt of it," the old General would say at other times, "my daughter's eyes are handsomer than the Duchess's, for the reason that they are capable on occasion of expressing greater depth of feeling; but when does she exhibit that magnificent expression? In a drawing-room, where it would reflect credit on her? never; only when she is driving, with no one by but me, and some old vagabond, for instance, excites her sympathy by his tale of suffering. 'Keep some portion of that sublime expression,' I sometimes say to her, 'for the entertainment which we are to attend to-night.' But no; if she condescends to go out with me all that she displays on her pure, proud face is a frosty and not very encouraging expression of self-sacrifice." As will be seen, the General spared no effort to provide himself with a son-in-law suited to his mind; but all he said was true.

Courtiers, who have not much to occupy

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their minds, are observant; in the present case they had noticed that it was mainly on occasions when Clelia seemed wedded to her dear reveries and disinclined to come down to earth that the Duchess sought her company and attempted to engage her in conversation. Clelia's hair was of the color of pale gold, shading cheeks that vied with the delicate hue of the wild rose; often, however, they were paler than her friends liked to see them. To the close observer the shape of the forehead alone would have shown that that noble air, that bearing so loftily superior to all vulgar graces, were the result of her profound disdain for all that was low and mean. If she was impassive it was not from lack of capacity to feel, but because there was nothing in her surroundings to interest her. Since her father's appointment to the governorship of the citadel Clelia had led a happier, or at least more untroubled life, up in her aërial lodging. The number of steps that had to be climbed in order to reach the Governor's palace, situated on the esplanade of the great tower, had the effect of keeping away unwelcome visitors and made the place almost as quiet as a convent; it was almost the ideal of peaceful solitude that the girl

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had at one time thought of seeking in a religious life. All her being revolted at the mere thought of laying bare her soul before a husband, whom his new relationship would authorize in destroying, should he see fit to do so, her spiritual existence. If her solitude did not afford her complete happiness, it at least saved her from many moments of vexation and annoyance.

On the evening of the day that saw Fabrice lodged in prison the Duchess met Clelia at the reception of the Minister of the Interior, Count Zurla. The guests collected around them in a circle. Clelia's beauty for once outshone the Duchess's. The young girl's eyes had in them an expression so profound and strange that they were almost indiscreet; there was pity, there were also wrath and generous indignation in her looks. The Duchess's gaiety and brilliancy seemed to cause Clelia a suffering verging on horror. "Think of the tears the poor woman will shed," she thought, "when she learns that her lover, that noble-hearted, godlike young man, is an inmate of a prison! And those looks of the sovereign in which death resides! O despotism, when wilt thou cease to grind poor Italy beneath thy iron heel!

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O base and venal souls ! And I am a jailer's daughter ! And when I had a chance to protest against my odious position by answering Fabrice I did not do it—and he was once my benefactor ! What must he think of me now, alone in his cell lighted by the dim glimmer of his little lamp ? ” Revolted by the thought, Clelia cast looks of horror on the splendid illumination of the Minister's salons.

The courtiers who swarmed around the two reigning beauties, endeavoring to obtain a word or look from them, said to one another, “ They were never seen before to converse so animatedly and yet with such a good understanding—what can it mean ? Can the Duchess, in her desire to allay the animosities excited by the Prime Minister, be planning a match for little Clelia ? ” The conjecture was supported by a circumstance that had never before been witnessed by the court : the young girl's eyes showed more fire, and even, if the expression be not too strong, more passion, than those of the handsome Duchess. The latter was astonished and, to her credit be it said, delighted by the new attractions that she discovered in the young recluse ; she had been contemplating her an hour with a pleasure that a woman

seldom experiences in looking on a rival. "But what is going on?" the Duchess asked herself. "Never has Clelia appeared so beautiful and attractive: can her heart at last have spoken? But if so, certainly her love is not a happy one, for that abnormal animation masks anxiety and suffering. But unhappy love suffers and is silent. Is she trying by other conquests to recall a faithless admirer?" And the Duchess scanned with an inquiring eye the young men who stood around her in a circle. She discovered nothing strange or unusual on their faces; they all wore the same old empty, fatuous, self-satisfied expression. "But there is *something* beneath it all," said the Duchess, piqued by her inability to solve the mystery. "Where is Count Mosca, that reader of riddles? No, I am not mistaken — Clelia is watching *me*; she looks at me as if she had found in me something new to interest her. Is it the effect of some order given by her father, that vile minion of the court? I had supposed that young and noble soul incapable of stooping to concern itself with affairs of money. Has General Fabio Conti some request to make of the Count?"

About ten o'clock a friend of the Duchess approached and spoke to her in a whisper;

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her face at once became very pale. Clelia took her hand and pressed it tenderly.

“I understand now. I thank you—you are a noble creature,” said the Duchess, with an effort; she had barely strength to articulate those few words. She summoned up courage to smile on the mistress of the house, who rose and accompanied her through the long suite of rooms to the outer door. Such an honor was reserved for princesses of the blood and seemed to the poor Duchess sadly out of place in her present circumstances. So she smiled sweetly on Countess Zurla, but in spite of all her efforts was unable to proffer a single word of thanks.

Tears rose to Clelia’s eyes as she watched the Duchess pass out among the brilliant crowd that filled the salons. “How will it be with that poor woman,” she reflected, “when she is alone in her carriage? I dare not offer to accompany her; she might consider it an indiscretion. And yet, what a comfort it would be to the wretched prisoner, seated in his dismal cell, could he know that he is loved so dearly! Ah, to think of *him*, in solitude and darkness, while *we* are here, surrounded by light and flowers, in these luxurious salons—it is too horrible! I won-

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der could a letter be gotten to him?—but that would be treachery to my father; his position between the two parties is so precarious! What would become of him should he incur the hostility of the Duchess, who controls the Prime Minister, who in nine cases out of ten is the court of last resort? On the other hand, the Prince gives particular attention to all that goes on within the fortress, and he will have no trifling there—their fears make men cruel. In any event, Fabrice [Clelia had ceased to call him Mgr. del Dongo] is an object for our compassion—he has other matters to distress him now than the loss of a lucrative place. And the Duchess!—What a terrible passion is love!—and yet all those lying writers of books speak of it as a source of happiness—old women are pitied because they can no longer know love or inspire it in others. I shall never forget what I have seen this evening; how great and sudden was the change! The Duchess's eyes, but now so bright, so radiant, how dull and lifeless they all at once became after the whispered communication of the Marquis N——! Fabrice must have been born to gain the love of women!”

To Clelia, engrossed in these serious re-

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flections, the compliments and flatteries that were showered on her from every quarter seemed even more insipid and disagreeable than usual. To escape them she retreated to an open window in front of which hung a muslin curtain, where she hoped her molesters would not follow her. The window looked out on a small grove of orange-trees growing in the open air; it was found necessary, however, to give them the protection of a roof in winter. The girl inhaled the delicious perfume of the blossoms, and the peaceful enjoyment restored in some measure her tranquillity. "He struck me as having a noble air," she thought, "but that he should inspire such a passion in a woman of such distinction! She has had the renown of refusing the homage of the Prince, and had she so willed might have been mistress of all his dominions. My father told me once that his love for her was such that he would surely marry her should he ever become free. And this love for Fabrice has lasted so long a time! for it is five years since we met them near the Lake of Como. Yes, fully five years," she added, after a moment of reflection. "It made an impression on me even then, when so many things passed un-

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noticed before my girlish eyes. How those two ladies seemed to admire Fabrice ! ”

Clelia was pleased to observe that none of her would-be suitors ventured to come near her balcony. One of them, the Marquis Crescenzi, had taken a few steps in that direction, then had sidled off and taken his place at one of the card-tables. “If,” she said to herself, “under my little window in the palace of the fortress—the only one that is shaded—I only had a few handsome orange-trees like these, my thoughts would be less melancholy ; but all my eyes have to rest on is the great bare wall of the Farnèse Tower.—Ah ! ” she exclaimed, with an involuntary shudder, “perhaps it is there they have lodged him. How I wish I could speak with Don Cesare ! he would be less strict than father. I shall learn nothing from the General when we get home, but Don Cesare would tell me everything. I have a little money ; I might buy a few orange-trees and set them out under the window of my aviary ; they would shut off the view of that hateful wall. How much more hateful still it will appear to me now that I know one of those from whom it shuts out the light of day !—Yes, this was the third occasion of my seeing him : once at court, at the Princess’s birthday ball ; to-day

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in the midst of the gendarmes, with that horrible Barbone trying to have him put in handcuffs; and that time near Lake Como. That was five years ago. What a young scapegrace he looked like then, and how strangely his aunt and mother looked at him! There was certainly something, a secret of some kind, between them that day; I remember thinking at the time that he too had reason to fear the police—but pshaw! I was only an ignorant girl. Doubtless the Duchess had taken a liking to him even then. How he made us all laugh after a few minutes, when the two ladies, in spite of their evident anxiety, had become somewhat accustomed to my presence!—and this evening I could allow him to speak to me and never so much as answer. O ignorance and timidity, how you have made me appear guilty of black ingratitude! And I a girl past twenty! I was right in thinking of the convent; all I am fit for is a life apart. ‘A jailer’s worthy daughter!’ he will say. He despises me, and when he has a chance to write to the Duchess will speak of my shameful behavior; and the Duchess will think I am a false, deceitful girl, for she could not have helped noticing my manifestations of sympathy for her this evening.”

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Clelia became aware that some one was approaching, evidently with the purpose of sharing her balcony with her. She could not help a feeling of vexation, although she tried immediately to repress it; the reveries that were threatened with interruption were not entirely disagreeable. "Here comes a tiresome person who might better have stayed away!" she said to herself. As she turned her head with a look not exactly of welcome she caught sight of the timid face of the Archbishop, who was approaching the balcony in a sort of apologetic way, with little imperceptible movements. "The good man has no idea of what constitutes good manners," thought Clelia. "Why does he come troubling a poor girl like me, who has nothing in the world but her tranquillity?" She saluted him with respect, but rather frostily. The prelate said to her:

"My daughter, have you heard the dreadful news?"

The young girl's eyes at once assumed another and entirely different expression; but mindful of the oft-repeated instructions of her father, she replied, with an air of ignorance that was belied by the language of her eyes:

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“I have heard nothing, monsignor.”

“My first Grand Vicar, poor Fabrice del Dongo, who is no more guilty of the murder of that ruffian Giletti than I am, has been forcibly abducted from Bologna, where he was living under the assumed name of Joseph Bossi; they brought him here chained like a wild beast to the floor of the carriage, and have locked him up in your citadel. A sort of turnkey, named Barbone, who once murdered one of his brothers and subsequently received a pardon, attempted personal violence on Fabrice; but my young man is not of the sort that takes an insult tamely. He knocked his cowardly adversary down, whereon he was handcuffed and clapped into a dungeon twenty feet underground.”

“Oh no, he was n’t handcuffed—”

“Ah, you know about it!” exclaimed the Archbishop, and their expression of profound discouragement faded from the old man’s features. “But, before some one comes and interrupts us here, will you, for the sake of Christian charity, undertake to deliver to Don Cesare in person this, my pastoral ring?”

The girl took the ring, but was at a loss for a safe place for it.

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"Place it on your thumb," said the Archbishop, and he put it on with his own hands. "I can depend on your delivering it to Don Cesare?"

"Yes, monsignor."

"Will you promise me to keep secret what I am going to ask you further, even if you should not think best to grant my request?"

"Yes, certainly, monsignor," replied the young girl, alarmed by the dark and mysterious air that the old man all at once assumed. "But surely," she added mentally, "our venerated Archbishop would never order me to do anything that I ought not to do."

"Tell Don Cesare that I recommend my adopted son to his good offices; knowing that the bailiffs who abducted him did not give him time to get his breviary, I beg Don Cesare to lend him his, and if your excellent uncle will send to-morrow to my palace I will see that he has another prayer-book in place of the one given to Fabrice. I also beg Don Cesare to transmit to him the ring you have on your little thumb." The Archbishop was interrupted by the arrival of General Fabio Conti, who came to conduct his daughter to their carriage. There was a brief moment of

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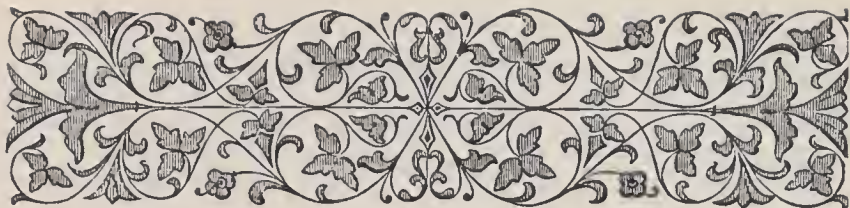
conversation, in which the prelate displayed considerable adroitness. While carefully refraining from alluding to the new-made prisoner by name, he led the talk into channels that enabled him to introduce certain moral and political maxims, as, for instance : “There are crises in the life of governments which exert a long-continued influence on the fortunes of those in power ; it would be the height of imprudence to convert into personal animosity those political differences which are merely the result of an honest diversity of opinion.” The Archbishop, warming up under the stimulus of the irritation caused by the unexpected events of the day, went on to say that, while it certainly behooved a man to do his best to retain what honors and places he had, it would be extremely unwise to draw down on himself enmities that might last a lifetime by lending himself to certain proceedings that are never forgotten.

“That sounded very much like a threat !” said the General to his daughter when they had taken their places in their carriage. “Threats to a man of my condition !” These were the only words spoken during their ride of twenty minutes.

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In receiving the pastoral ring from the Archbishop, Clelia had promised herself that when she was alone with her father in the carriage she would speak to him of the slight service requested by the prelate; but after the angry tone of the few words above recorded, she felt sure that he would interfere to prevent her executing her commission; she therefore placed her left hand over the ring and kept it concealed. During the entire time consumed by their ride from the Minister's to the citadel she was asking herself whether it would be wrong not to mention the matter to her father. She was pious and very timid, and her heart was thumping beneath her corsage with unaccustomed violence. The end of the matter was that the *qui vive* of the sentinel posted on the rampart over the gate rang out at the approach of the carriage before Clelia had settled on a form of words that she thought would be likely to incline her father in her favor; for she was horribly afraid of a refusal. Nor was she more successful in her quest while climbing the three hundred and eighty steps that led to the Governor's palace. She hastened to lay her trouble before her uncle, who scolded her and refused to meddle with the affair.





XVI

“**W**ELL,” exclaimed the General when he saw his brother, Don Cesare, “there ’s the Duchess, they say, ready to spend a hundred thousand crowns to fool me and secure her nephew’s escape.”

But for the time being we are compelled to leave Fabrice in his prison-cell, away at the top of Parma citadel; he is well guarded, and we can depend on finding him there, somewhat changed, perhaps, when he is next wanted. Our business now lies with the court, where a series of involved intrigues and the passions of an unhappy woman are to decide his fate. While ascending the three hundred and eighty steps of the Farnèse Tower with the Governor’s eyes on him, Fabrice, who had so dreaded

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that moment, found that he had no time to think of his misfortunes.

On returning home after the reception at Count Zurla's the Duchess dismissed her women and, throwing herself fully dressed upon her bed, cried, "Fabrice is in the power of his enemies; likely as not they will poison him to be revenged on me!" What words can depict the moment of despair that followed this succinct statement of the situation in a woman so impulsive, and who, without admitting it to herself, was madly in love with the youthful prisoner? There were inarticulate cries, transports of rage, convulsive movements, but not a tear. She had sent away her women that they might not behold her weakness; she had thought that as soon as she was alone her feelings would assert their mastery; but tears, those momentary comforters in affliction, refused to come. Rage, indignation, the sentiment of her powerlessness as regarded the Prince, held possession of that proud soul.

"My humiliation is complete!" she exclaimed. "I am outraged, insulted, defied; worse, Fabrice's life is threatened, and I am not to avenge him! Stop there, my Prince!"

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you may kill me, perhaps—you have the power—but in the end I will have your life. Alas! poor Fabrice, what good will that do you? How different this from the day on which I would have left Parma! and yet then I thought myself unhappy—blind fool that I was! I would have broken with the daily habits of an agreeable life; alas! without knowing it I was precipitating an event that was to shape my destiny forever. Had not the Count, like the servile, cringing courtier that he is, expunged the words ‘iniquitous proceedings’ from the letter wrung by me from the Prince’s vanity, we were safe. I had the good fortune rather than the address, it must be owned, to call into play the conceit in which he holds his beloved city of Parma—then I threatened to go away, then I was free. Good God, what a slave I am now!—a prisoner in this sewer of infamy, and Fabrice in chains in a dungeon of the citadel—that citadel which to so many illustrious men has proved the ante-chamber of death—and I unable longer to hold that tiger in subjection by the threat to quit his lair.

“He knows full well that I will never go far away from that accursed tower to which

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my heart is chained. The man's offended self-esteem may suggest to him strange and horrible ideas; their cruelty and singularity would be of a piece with his astounding vanity. Should he renew his former proposals of gallantry, should he say to me, 'Accept your admirer's homage, or Fabrice shall perish'—well—, it would be the old story of Judith over again. Yes, but what for me is only suicide will be murder in Fabrice's case, for the oaf of a successor, our hereditary Prince, and Jack Ketch Rassi will infallibly hang him as my accomplice."

The Duchess wrung her hands; the dilemma, from which she could see no way of extricating herself, was torture to her poor heart. Her troubled brain could discover no hope or promise in the future. For ten minutes she tossed and writhed upon her bed like one whose reason had departed. At last the slumber of exhaustion fell on her and gave her a brief respite from her sufferings; the vital forces were exhausted. In a few minutes she woke and found herself sitting upright on her bed; she had dreamed that the Prince was in the room with a great knife trying to cut off Fabrice's head. She gazed around the chamber with haggard, be-

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wildered eyes. When finally convinced that neither the Prince nor Fabrice was present she fell back among the pillows and had nearly fainted. Her physical weakness was such that she had not strength to change her position. "Merciful God, let me die!" she exclaimed. "But that is cowardice—what! I abandon Fabrice in his time of trouble? My wits are wandering. Come, let's get back to reality; let us examine coolly the miserable position into which I have thrust myself as if of set purpose. To come and take up my abode at the court of a despotic prince—what fatal inconsiderateness! A tyrant, who is acquainted with all his victims; not a look of theirs but seems a defiance addressed to his authority. Alas! that is something that neither the Count nor I thought of when I left Milan; I had in mind the pleasures of an agreeable court, not the equal, it is true, but something in the style of the glorious days of Prince Eugene.

"At that distance we had no idea how great is the authority of a despot who knows every one of his subjects by sight. Despotism, in its outer forms, does not differ from other modes of government: there are

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judges, for example, but they are men like Rassi. The monster! he would not hesitate to hang his own father if the Prince should bid him do so—he would say it was his duty. Bribe Rassi! Heaven help me, I have not the means. What have I to offer him? Perhaps a hundred thousand francs; and it is said that the last time the wrath of Heaven toward this unhappy country saved him from the poniard of the assassin the Prince sent him ten thousand golden sequins in a casket. Besides, what sum of money would suffice to buy him? The low-born whelp! until lately he has beheld only scorn and contempt in the eyes of his fellow-men, but now they are beginning to regard him with fear and even with respect. He may become minister of police; and why should he not? Then three fourths of the people of the country will be his slavish lickspittles and will tremble at his nod as servilely as he now trembles before the sovereign.

“Since I cannot fly this detested spot I must look around me and see how I can best serve Fabrice; but how can I serve him if I am to live by myself, in solitary despair? Come, unhappy woman, be up and doing; do your duty, go out in society, feign that you

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think of Fabrice no more. Ah, dear angel, feign to think no more of *you*?"

At these words she burst into tears; her faculty of weeping was at last restored to her. After an hour abandoned to human weakness she saw with some satisfaction that her ideas were beginning to grow clearer. "Oh for the magic carpet," she said, "that I might carry Fabrice off from the citadel and fly with him to some blessed land—Paris, for instance—where our enemies could never find us. We could live at first on the twelve hundred francs a year that his father's attorney remits to me with such amusing regularity. Then I might possibly get together a hundred thousand francs from the ruins of my fortune." The Duchess reviewed in imagination, with inexpressible delight, all the details of the life she would lead three hundred leagues from Parma. "He might enter the army under an assumed name," she told herself. "With a company in one of those brave French regiments the young Valserra would quickly make a reputation for himself; at any rate, he would be happy."

These pleasing visions brought back the tears again, but they were gentle tears this

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time. There was happiness, then, for her, somewhere! This state of mind lasted for a long time; the poor woman could not endure the thought of coming back to face stern reality once more. At last, just as the new day was beginning to tip with white the tree-tops of her garden, she took herself in hand. "In a few hours from now," she said, "I shall be on the battle-field, I shall have to act; and if anything unpleasant should occur, if the Prince should see fit to speak to me in relation to Fabrice's case, it is not at all certain that I should be as collected as I ought to be. It behooves me, then, to make up my mind as to what I am to do, here and now.

"If I am criminally accused, Rassi will proceed to lay hands on everything contained in this palace. On the first of the month the Count and I burned as usual all the papers that the police might use against us; and he is minister of police! that is the funny part of it. I have three diamonds of some value; to-morrow Fulgence, my old boatman at Grianta, shall start for Geneva and deposit them in a place of safety. If ever Fabrice escapes—merciful Lord, listen to my prayer," she added, crossing herself—

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“that wretched old skinflint the Marquis del Dongo will consider it a sin to give bread to a man under the ban of a legitimate prince : then he will have my diamonds to fall back on ; he need not starve.

“As for seeing the Count again after what has happened, or being alone with him for an instant, it is out of the question. The poor man ! he is not bad-hearted, he is only weak. His commonplace soul is incapable of rising to our level. Poor Fabrice ! would you were here a moment to aid me with your counsel in our peril !

“The Count’s fussy caution would spoil all my plans ; besides, I do not wish to drag him down with me in my fall. For what is to prevent the vain tyrant from casting me into prison ? I have conspired—what is easier to prove ? If he would but send me to his citadel and I might, by bribing the jailers, have one moment’s speech with Fabrice, how cheerfully we would both go to our death ! But a truce to such vain imaginings ; his Rassi would doubtless recommend him to make an end of me with poison ; to see me carried through the city mounted on a cart might prove too trying to the sensibilities of his dear Parmesans. What, more heroics !

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But something should be forgiven a poor woman whose actual destiny is such a pitiful one. The truth of the matter is, the Prince will not order me to execution; but nothing is easier than to put me in prison and keep me there; he will have his minions conceal all sorts of incriminating papers in out-of-the-way corners of my palace, as was done in poor L——'s case. After that three judges—they need not be more than ordinarily rascally, for there will be plenty of what they call *evidence*—and a dozen purchased witnesses will suffice for the work. So, there I am, under sentence of death as a conspirator, and the Prince, being graciously pleased to remember that I was once a member of his court, in his infinite clemency commutes my penalty to ten years' imprisonment. But I, to sustain that reputation for violence which Mme. Raversi and her friends kindly attribute to me, swallow a dose of poison—at least, so the public will be led to believe, but it is even betting that Rassi will come to my dungeon and politely present me, with the Prince's compliments, with a little phial of strychnine or the best Perugia opium.

“Yes, I must quarrel openly with the

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Count, for I do not wish him to share my ruin; it would be a shame—the poor man has been so candid in his love for me! I was foolish enough to believe that an out-and-out courtier could have enough soul left in him to be capable of loving. Most probably the Prince will find some excuse for putting me in prison; he will fear lest I pervert public opinion relatively to Fabrice. The Count is essentially a man of honor; he will instantly commit what the dolts and ninnies about the court will call a folly: he will resign his offices. I braved the Prince that evening he wrote the letter; there is nothing that I need not expect from his insulted vanity: does a man with royal blood in his veins ever forget a sensation such as I gave him that night? And then, too, the Count, estranged from me, will be in a better position to assist Fabrice. But suppose the Count, in his despair at my abandoning him, should take it in his head to be revenged? That is an idea which will never occur to him; he is not, like the Prince, innately base; he may countersign an infamous decree, protesting to himself the while, but he is at heart a man of honor. And for what should he seek to be revenged? because,

after loving him and being faithful to him for five years, I say to him, ‘Dear Count, I have been happy to be your friend; well, now the flame is extinguished; I love you no longer, but I know your heart, I retain for you an undying esteem, and I shall always count you among the number of my dearest friends’?

“What answer can a gallant man make to a straightforward declaration like that?

“I shall take a new lover, or at least give people that idea. I shall say to that lover, ‘The Prince was entirely right in punishing Fabrice for his indiscretion, but when his next birthday comes round our gracious sovereign will doubtless give him his liberty.’ In that way I shall gain six months. Prudence would dictate that the new lover should be the mercenary judge, the blood-stained butcher, Rassi—it would shed distinction on him, and I might introduce him into good society. Forgive me, dear Fabrice! such an effort is too great for my strength. What, pretend to love that monster, with his victims’ blood still fresh on his garments! I should faint with horror at his approach, or rather I should seize a knife and plunge it into his black heart. You must not ask of me impossibilities.

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“This is the programme, then. First of all, to forget Fabrice—ah me! To harbor no malice against the Prince. To resume my accustomed liveliness, which will appear all the more charming to those torpid souls because, in the first place, I shall seem to submit gracefully to the will of their sovereign, and next, because, instead of making game of them, I shall take pains to humor their little foibles; for instance, I will compliment Count Zurla on the feather he wears in his hat, which is his delight and pride, and for which he sent a special courier to Lyons.

“Then as for selecting a lover from the Raversi faction. If the Count steps down and out that will be the ministerial party; it will hold the reins of power. A friend of the Raversi will be governor of the citadel, for Fabio Conti will come into the ministry. How will the Prince, a man of intelligence, accustomed to good company and habituated to the Count’s charming society, ever be able to transact business with that ox, that sublime dullard, who all his life has been wrestling with the momentous problem whether seven or nine should be the number of buttons worn by His Highness’s troops on the breast of their coat? It is such

stupid brutes as he who are trying to down me, and there 's where your danger lies, dear Fabrice: it is those selfsame stupid brutes who are to decide your fate and mine. Hence the Count must not be allowed to tender his resignation; he must stick, no matter what the humiliation to which he may be subjected. He imagines that to offer his resignation is the greatest sacrifice that a prime minister has it in his power to make, and every time he looks in his glass and sees the crow's-feet about his eyes, he comes to me with that sacrifice. There must be a complete estrangement, then, and a reconciliation only in case he can be kept from resigning by no other means. Of course I shall give him his dismissal in most courteous and friendly terms, but after his servile omission of the words 'iniquitous proceedings' from the Prince's letter I feel that, if I am not to hate him, I had best not see him for some months. I was not in need of his advice on that memorable evening; he had only to write what I dictated. The base courtier in him cropped out and got the best of him. He told me the next day that he could not find it in his heart to allow his Prince to put his signature to an absurdity. Great

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heavens! when such people are concerned, such monsters of vanity, rancor, and ingratitude as the Farnèse, one takes whatever he can get."

At this reflection the Duchess's wrath blazed up afresh. "The Prince deceived me," she cried, "and how basely, how meanly he did it! There is no excuse for him: he has judgment, good sense, intelligence; his only defect is his passions. His understanding never becomes commonplace except he imagines some one has attempted to put a slight on him; the Count and I have noticed that a score of times. Well, Fabrice's offense had nothing to do with politics; it was one of those plain, every-day murders that are of almost daily occurrence in His Highness's dominions, and the Count has assured me that he has sifted the case to the bottom and that Fabrice is innocent. That Giletti was no coward; he knew that the frontier was only a step distant, and thought the occasion a favorable one for ridding himself of a successful rival."

The Duchess paused for quite a while, debating with herself the question of Fabrice's culpability; not that she regarded it as a very heinous crime that a gentleman of her

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nephew's station should chastise a play-actor when he became impertinent, but she was beginning to be vaguely conscious that to prove Fabrice's innocence would be a less easy task than she had supposed. "No," she at last said to herself, "this proves the matter to my satisfaction: he used to remind me of poor Pietranera, by always going about with pistols in his pockets; and all he had with him that day was an old single-barreled gun, and that was borrowed from one of his hands.

"I hate the Prince because he deceived me, and deceived me in a most low and shameful manner—abducting him from Bologna after he had given me assurance of his pardon, etc. But never mind; I will see that the account is squared." About five o'clock in the morning the Duchess, exhausted by her long and anxious vigil, rang for her women. They gave a little shriek as they entered the room; seeing her stretched out on her bed, fully dressed, decked with all her jewels, white as her sheets, and eyes tight closed, she appeared to them like a corpse arrayed for burial. They remembered that she had rung, else they would have believed her in a faint. A tear now and then coursed down her

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marble cheek ; she partly rose and intimated to the women by a sign her wish to be put to bed.

After the soirée at Minister Zurla's the Count had twice presented himself at the Duchess's palace ; on admission being denied him he wrote that he was in need of her advice on a matter that concerned himself. "Ought he to remain in office after the affront that had been put on him?" He added: "The young man is innocent; but were he guilty, should they have arrested him without consulting me, his avowed protector?" It was not until the following day that the Duchess saw this letter.

The Count had no *virtue* ; it might be said, even, that what the Liberals understand by virtue (seeking the welfare of the greatest number) seemed to him a deception ; he considered it his first duty to seek the welfare of Count Mosca della Rovere ; but he was honest and perfectly sincere in speaking of offering his resignation. Never once during their acquaintance had he told the Duchess a lie. She, however, gave no attention whatever to the letter ; her resolution—and a horribly painful resolution it was—was arrived at: *she would feign to forget Fabrice*;

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beside this effort all else was matter of indifference.

The following day, about noon, the Count, who had knocked ten times that morning at the door of the Sanseverina palace, was finally admitted. On beholding the Duchess he was thunderstruck. "She looks a woman of forty," he said to himself, "and only yesterday so young, so brilliant! Every one says that, during her long conversation with Clelia Conti, she appeared quite as young as she, and far more attractive."

The Duchess's voice and tone were no less changed than her appearance. The tone, in which there was neither love, hate, nor any human interest, made the Count's cheek grow pale; it reminded him of the manner of a friend who, a few months previous, lying at the point of death and having already received the sacraments, had sent for him to come and see him.

After a few minutes the Duchess found strength to speak to him; her eyes were dull and lifeless.

"Let us part, my dear Count," she said, in a faint but perfectly articulate voice that she did her best to render cheerful; "let us part—it must be so! Heaven is my witness that

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for the last five years my conduct toward you has been irreproachable. Instead of the long hours of weariness that would have been my unhappy lot at the château of Grianta you have conferred on me a brilliant existence; but for you old age would have come to me some years sooner than it has done. For my part, my sole preoccupation has been to contribute to your happiness. It is because I love you that I propose this separation, *à l'aimable*, as they would say in France."

The Count could not understand at all; she was obliged to repeat her words. Then a mortal pallor overspread his face, and, sinking to his knees beside her couch, he addressed her in language such as only a passionate lover can use in the first bitter moment of his anguish. Again and again he offered to relinquish all his offices and retire with his mistress to some retreat a thousand leagues from Parma.

"How can you suggest to me to go away and leave Fabrice here!" she cried, partially rising and supporting herself on her elbow. But observing that the mention of Fabrice's name produced a disagreeable impression, after a moment's rest she added, slightly pressing the Count's hand, "No, my dear

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friend, I shall not tell you that I have loved you with those transports and that passion which, it seems to me, a woman no longer feels once she is over thirty, and I am far past that age. I suppose you have been told that Fabrice and I were lovers, for I know that that slander has circulated in this wicked court.” (For the first time during the conversation a light came to her eyes as she uttered the word “wicked.”) “I swear to you before God, and by Fabrice’s life, that never the slightest thing has passed between us that we would have wished unseen by a third party. Neither will I tell you that I love him with a sister’s love ; I love him from instinct, if I may use the expression. I love him for his courage, so simple and so perfect that one may say he is himself unaware of its existence. I remember when this species of hero-worship began ; it was after his return from Waterloo. He was only a great boy then, for all he was seventeen ; his chief subject of anxiety was to know if he had really been present at the battle, and, if he was present, if he could say he had had a part in it, not having stormed a battery or charged a hostile column. It was during the grave discussions that we had together on this

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vital question that I commenced to see all the charm that resided in him. His simplicity and grandeur of soul were revealed to me; what cunningly contrived tales many another young man would have recited in his place! To sum up, unless he is happy I cannot be happy. There, those few words will show you faithfully the condition of my heart; they are the truth, so far as I know myself." The Count, encouraged by this tone of frankness and intimacy, would have kissed her hand; she drew it back with a kind of horror. "Those times are past and gone," she said; "I am thirty-seven years old, I am at the portal of old age, I have already begun to feel its sorrows and trials; perhaps I am not far distant from the tomb. That is a terrible moment, from what all say, and yet it seems to me that I could welcome it. I am suffering the worst symptom of old age: my heart is dead; this frightful calamity has killed it; I am no longer capable of loving. All I can see in you, dear Count, is the shade of some one who once was dear to me. I will go further, and say it is gratitude alone that induces me to speak to you thus."

"What is to become of me?" murmured

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the Count, "unhappy man that I am ! I feel that I am more passionately attached to you than in the beginning, when I first saw you at la Scala !"

"If you will permit me to say one thing, dear friend, to speak of love annoys me and seems to me indecent. Come," said she, with a vain attempt to smile, "have courage ! be a man, with head, hand, and heart ready to meet and conquer adversity. Be to me what you really are in the eyes of the impartial, the ablest man and the greatest statesman that Italy has produced in centuries."

The Count rose and paced the room in silence for some minutes.

"Impossible, dear friend," he said at last. "I am racked and torn by the most violent passion, and do you ask me to use my reasoning faculties ? I tell you that reason no longer exists for me !"

"If you please, we will leave passion out of the question," she said, sharply, and it was the first time in the course of their two hours' conversation that her voice betrayed any approach to emotion. The Count, reduced to despair, endeavored to soothe her.

"He deceived me," she cried, without a word of reply to his cheering exhortations

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—"he deceived me in the most cruel and shameful manner!" The corpse-like pallor of her face was replaced for a moment by a faint color; but even in her exaltation the Count noticed that she had not strength to raise her arm.

"Good God!" he thought, "can it be that this is the commencement of an illness? If so, there is reason to fear it may prove serious." And in his anxiety he proposed to send for Razori, the leading physician of the city and of Italy.

"You would gratify a stranger by letting him see the full extent of my despair? Is that the counsel of a traitor or a friend?" And she looked at him strangely out of her great wild eyes.

"It is all over," he sorrowfully said to himself, "she has no more love for me! And what is worse, she ranks me with the common herd of vulgar-minded men."

"I should tell you," the Count continued, speaking with great earnestness, "that I used my best efforts to secure full details concerning the arrest which has plunged us in such affliction, but, strange as it may appear, I have thus far learned nothing positive. I sent my agents to question the gendarmes at

the station next to ours; they saw the prisoner arrive by the Castelnovo road, and received orders to accompany the *sediola*. I immediately sent off Bruno, with whose zeal and discretion you are acquainted, with instructions to follow the trail back from station to station and ascertain where and how Fabrice was arrested."

A convulsive trembling shook the Duchess's frame as Fabrice's name was mentioned.

"Excuse me, my friend," she said, as soon as she could articulate; "those matters are extremely interesting to me; tell me all, down to the most trifling circumstance, so that I may understand clearly."

"Well, madame," rejoined the Count, using a lighter tone to see if it would not cheer her up a little, "I am going to see what we can accomplish by sending a confidential clerk to Bruno with orders for him to push on to Bologna; I should not be surprised if it was from there that our young friend was abducted. When was his last letter dated?"

"Tuesday, five days ago."

"Had it been tampered with in the mail?"

"It showed no sign of having been opened. I should tell you that it was written on coarse, cheap paper; the superscription was

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in a woman's writing, and it was addressed to an old washerwoman, a relative of my confidential maid. The old woman believes that she is acting as postmistress for a pair of lovers, and Chékina is careful to hold her tongue when she repays her for the postage."

The Count, who by this time had dropped the lover for the man of business, endeavored by cross-questioning the Duchess to obtain some idea of the date of the abduction from Bologna. It was then for the first time that he, ordinarily so tactful, saw that that was the course he should have adopted in the beginning. The detailed narration interested the unhappy woman and to some extent diverted her attention from her troubles. It was owing to the fact that the Count was in love that this perfectly simple idea had not occurred to him as soon as he entered the room. The Duchess dismissed him with injunctions to send off further orders to the faithful Bruno without a moment's delay.

As they were discussing the question whether sentence had been passed before or after the moment when the Prince affixed his signature to the letter to the Duchess, the latter availed herself of the opportunity to say to the Count: "I shall not reproach you for

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having expunged the words ‘iniquitous proceedings’ from the letter which you wrote and he signed; the courtier instinct was too strong for you. You were not aware of it at the time, but you preferred your master’s interest to your mistress’s. You have allowed me to direct your actions, my dear Count, for this long time back, but it is not in your power to change your nature; you possess great talent for the ministerial career, but you have also the instincts of the profession. The suppression of those words has been my ruin, but far be it from me to reproach you in any way; it was the fault of the instinct, not of the will.

“Remember,” she added, with a complete change of tone, and in the most imperious accents, “that I am not feeling particularly bad over Fabrice’s arrest, that I have never had the slightest intention of leaving this country, and that my respect for the Prince is unbounded. That is what you have to tell to the world at large, and this is what I wish to tell you: as I propose to be the sole directress of my conduct in the future, it is my desire that we part good friends. Look on me as a woman of sixty; my youth is dead and buried; I can no longer view things

through youthful eyes; I am no longer capable of loving. But it would make me more unhappy even than I am if I thought I had been the means of injuring your prospects. It is possible that in furtherance of my plans I may take, to outward seeming, a young lover; I would not have you distressed beyond measure. I can swear to you by Fabrice's hopes of happiness"—she lingered slightly on these words—"that during the five years of our connection I have never been unfaithful to you. That is a long time," she said; she tried to smile, but her pale lips refused to part. "More, I can swear that I have never had an unfaithful wish or thought. Bear that in mind, and leave me."

The Count left the Sanseverina palace with despair in his heart; he saw that the Duchess's mind was irrevocably made up to leave him, and he had never loved her so madly. This is one of those things that I am compelled to repeat frequently, because elsewhere than in Italy they are so improbable. When he got home he despatched as many as six different messengers with letters for places along the road to Bologna and Castelnovo. "But that is not all," the

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wretched man said to himself; "the Prince may see fit to order the poor boy's execution, as a measure of revenge for the Duchess's manner toward him on the day of that fatal letter. I felt that the Duchess was going too far, and by way of mending matters was so incredibly stupid as to suppress the expression 'iniquitous proceedings,' which alone was capable of binding the sovereign. But pshaw! are men of his stamp ever bound by anything? It was the greatest mistake of my life; I risked all that makes life dear to me; it remains to see what activity and address can do to repair my blunder; but if I can accomplish nothing in the end, even at the cost of some sacrifice of dignity, I can at least have the satisfaction of leaving that man to his devices; with his utopian visions and his views on a constitutional monarchy for Lombardy, we'll see how he will supply my place. Fabio Conti is only a blockhead; Rassi's ability consists in hanging legally any man who has lost the sovereign's favor."

Once the resolution arrived at of resigning office in case the severities toward Fabrice were extended beyond simple imprisonment, the Count said to himself, "If a caprice of

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offended vanity on the part of that man costs me my happiness, at least my honor will be safe. By the way, now that I hold my portfolio so cheap, I can do lots of things that no later than this morning I would not have dared to think of. For instance, I am going to do everything within the power of mortal man to assist Fabrice to escape. Good Lord!" cried he, interrupting himself and opening his eyes wide as if at the sight of an unexpected happiness, "the Duchess said nothing of an escape—I wonder if it can be that for once in her life she was wanting in sincerity, and the estrangement was but the expression of a wish that I should betray the Prince? Egad, the thing is done!"

The Count's eyes twinkled with their old expression of satiric cunning. "That pleasant rascal Rassi is paid by the master for all the sentences that dishonor us in the eyes of Europe, but he is not the kind of man to refuse pay from me for betraying the master's secrets. The animal has a mistress and a confessor, but the mistress is such a low-down creature that I would n't for the life of me be seen speaking to her, and our conversation would be known by the next day to all

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the orange-women of the neighborhood." The Count, when cheered by this ray of hope, was on his way to the cathedral; he was astonished to find himself stepping off so briskly, and smiled, notwithstanding his cares and troubles. "It 's a great thing," he said, "to be no longer minister!" The cathedral, as is the case with many Italian churches, served as a means of communication between two parallel streets; the Count caught sight of one of the Archbishop's vicars crossing the nave.

"Since I am so fortunate as to meet you," he said, "I should take it very kindly if you would spare my gouty legs the fatigue of climbing up to His Grace's study. Tell him I shall be under everlasting obligations to him if he will come down to the sacristy for a moment." The Archbishop was overjoyed; he was aching to unburden himself to the Minister in relation to Fabrice's affairs. But the Minister soon saw that all he had to say was wind and froth, and refused to listen.

"What manner of man is Dugnani, Vicar of St. Paul's?"

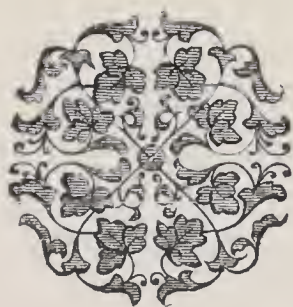
"A small mind and a great ambition," replied the Archbishop; "not over-scrupulous,

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and extremely poor—for we, too, have our vices!”

“Upon my word, monsignor!” exclaimed the Count, “you are a Tacitus in describing character;” and he hurried away laughing. The first thing he did on getting home was to send for the Abbé Dugnani.

“I believe you have charge of the conscience of my excellent friend Rassi, the Fiscal General; do you think he has anything to say to me?” And without further words or ceremony he dismissed the Abbé.





XVII

THE Count regarded himself as out of office. "Let 's see," he reflected, "how many horses we shall be able to keep after my disgrace—for that is what people will call my retirement." He made an estimate of his fortune: he had entered the ministry with eighty thousand francs to his credit; greatly to his surprise, he found, counting everything, that his total present wealth did not amount to five hundred thousand francs. "Say twenty thousand francs a year at the outside," he said to himself. "There 's no denying that I am a great blockhead! There is not a bourgeois in Parma that does n't put me down at a hundred and fifty thousand a year, and the Prince on that head is a bigger bourgeois than them all. When they see me living in a garret they will say I have a



happy knack of concealing my fortune. By the Lord!" he exclaimed, "let me be minister three months longer and we'll see what we can do toward doubling that fortune." He saw an excuse for writing to the Duchess, and eagerly availed himself of it; but knowing that a letter would not be well received in their then relations, he filled his communication with figures and statistics. "We shall have but twenty thousand francs a year," he said, "for the three of us to live on at Naples—Fabrice, you, and I. Fabrice and I will keep a saddle-horse between us." The Minister had barely closed his letter when Rassi, the Fiscal General, was announced; he received him with a coolness bordering on contempt.

"How is this, sir!" he said; "you cause to be abducted from Bologna an alleged conspirator who is my protégé, you do your best to send him to the gallows, and never breathe a word of it to me! Perhaps you can tell me the name of my successor? Who is he to be—General Conti? or yourself?"

Rassi was dismayed; he was too little acquainted with the manners and usages of good society to know whether the Count was speaking in jest or earnest. He blushed and mumbled some unintelligible words. The

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Count watched him, secretly enjoying his discomfiture. All at once the Fiscal pulled himself together and exclaimed with perfect assurance and the air of Figaro detected red-handed by Almaviva :

“Faith, Count, I ’ll not attempt to beat about the bush with Your Excellency. What will you give me if I promise to answer all your questions as I would those of my confessor ?”

“The cross of St. Paul (the order of Parma), or money, if you prefer it and can furnish me with a decent excuse for giving it to you.”

“I would rather have the cross of St. Paul, because it will make me a nobleman.”

“What ! my dear Fiscal, is it possible that you still attach some value to our poor nobility ?”

“If I had been born noble,” Rassi replied, with his usual impudence, “the relations of those men whom I hang might hate me, but they would not despise me.”

“Well, I will rescue you from contempt, do you cure me of my ignorance,” said the Count. “What are you going to do with Fabrice del Dongo ?”

“Faith, the Prince hardly knows himself.

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He is afraid that, seduced by Armida's handsome eyes—you will excuse the expression ; it's the Prince's, not mine—he is afraid, I say, that, seduced by handsome eyes whose bewitchment he has himself experienced, you will leave him in the lurch ; and he well knows that you are the only one capable of handling the affairs of Lombardy. I will go further," said Rassi, lowering his voice, "and tell you there is big money for you in the business ; you can well afford to give me the cross of St. Paul. His Highness will bestow on you a handsome property, alienated from his domain and worth six hundred thousand francs, or, at your option, a cash consideration of three hundred thousand crowns, provided you will consent to keep your hands off Fabrice del Dongo's case, or at least not speak to him of it except in public."

"I was looking for something better than that," replied the Count ; "if I don't interfere in Fabrice's case I shall have the Duchess down on me."

"The Prince's words, exactly. The fact is, between you and me, he is in a fearful state of mind against Madame the Duchess, and is afraid, in case you should become a widower,

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that by way of compensation for the loss of that charming lady you may ask him for the hand of his cousin the Princess Isota, who is only fifty years old."

"He has hit it," cried the Count; "our master is the most perspicacious man in his dominions."

Mosca had never had the most remote idea of marrying the venerable Princess; nothing could have been more distasteful to a man to whom the ceremonial of the court was a burden. He began tapping with his snuff-box on the marble top of a small table that stood beside his chair. The action in Rassi's eyes betokened irresolution, and the Fiscal thought he saw an opportunity of doing a good stroke of business. His little eyes began to sparkle.

"In case Your Excellency decides to accept either the landed property or the sum of money," he said, "I beg that Your Excellency will select me as the negotiator. I think I can promise," he added, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, "to secure an augmentation of the moneyed consideration, or to add a nice little forest to the domanial estate. If Your Excellency would only humor the Prince and use a little judgment in speak-

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ing of that young whipper-snapper whom we juggled the other day, it is possible that the estate offered by the national gratitude might be erected into a dukedom. I say to Your Excellency again, the Prince, for the time being, is very bitter against the Duchess; but he seems disturbed in mind, so much so that I sometimes think there are underlying circumstances that he is afraid to confess to me. There would be a mine of gold for us in an agreement whereby I should sell you his secrets, which could be done with perfect safety, for he believes me your sworn enemy. If he is furious against the Duchess, at the same time he fully believes, as we all do, that you are the only man in the country capable of conducting to a successful end the intrigues concerning the Milanese. Will Your Excellency permit me to repeat His Highness's words *verbatim*?" said Rassi, warming to his subject. "There is often a meaning in the connection and arrangement of words that a translation fails to render, and it is quite likely that you may discover more in his utterances than I did."

"I permit everything," said the Count, still tapping absently on the marble table with

his gold snuff-box—"I permit everything, and shall feel obliged to you."

"Give me an hereditary patent of nobility, in addition to the cross, and I shall be more than satisfied. When I suggest the idea to the Prince he answers me: 'What, make a nobleman out of a rascal like you! I can't do it; I should have to shut up shop the next day—no one in Parma would care to be ennobled after that.' To come back to the affair of the Milanese; His Highness was saying to me less than three days ago, 'It takes that sharper to tangle and disentangle the threads of our intrigues. If I dismiss him, or if he goes off with the Duchess, good-by to my hopes of some day seeing myself at the head of the Liberal party and adored by Italy.'"

The Count breathed more freely. "Fabrice won't die this time," he said to himself.

It was the first time that Rassi had succeeded in obtaining a private interview with the Prime Minister: he was beside himself with delight; there was a prospect that before very long he might be able to lay aside the name of Rassi, which was become synonymous throughout the land with all that was mean and base. Any one who had

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a worthless cur christened him Rassi. Two soldiers had lately fought a duel because one had called the other a Rassi. Not a week passed but the ill-starred name was commemorated in some atrocious copy of verses. His son, a harmless youth of sixteen and a collegian, was driven from the cafés on account of his name. It was the burning recollection of all these not very agreeable circumstances that led him to commit a blunder.

“I have a little place in the country,” he said, hitching his chair up closer to the Minister’s, “called la Riva; I would like to be Baron Riva.”

“And why should n’t you be?” replied the Count. Rassi was delighted.

“Well, Count, I am going to be indiscreet and tell the object of your desires: you aspire to the hand of the Princess Isota, and a noble and laudable ambition it is. Once connected by ties of marriage you are safe from all danger of removal; you have a pull with our man that nothing can destroy. I will tell you frankly that he won’t allow you to marry the Princess without making a kick; but if your affairs were in the hands of an adroit and *well-remunerated* person

there might be reasonable grounds for not despairing.”

“I should despair, my dear Baron, and I disavow in advance all the pledges that you may make in my name; but on the day when that illustrious alliance is ratified, fulfilling my dearest hopes and giving me so distinguished a position in the State, I will give you three hundred thousand francs from my own fortune, or else I will recommend the Prince to accord you any mark of favor that you may elect in preference to that sum.”

The reader may find comfort in the reflection that, if this conversation seems long to him, it might have been much longer; in fact, we have spared him more than half of it, and it was protracted a further space of two hours. Rassi left the Count's presence in a semi-delirious state of elation. The Count had strong hopes of saving Fabrice, and was more firmly resolved than ever to resign his charges. He had found that to retain his influence with the government he would have to ally himself with creatures like Rassi and Conti. He contemplated with pleasure the prospect of being revenged on the Prince. “He may drive the Duchess

out of the country," he said to himself, "but, by the Almighty, he shall lay aside all hope of ever being constitutional king of Lombardy." (This was an absurd, visionary project; the Prince was a man of intelligence, but he had allowed himself to brood on the scheme until his brain had become addled.) The Count seemed to be walking on air as he speeded off to the Duchess's palace to relate to her his conversation with the Fiscal. He found the door closed against him; the porter told him that the order had emanated from his mistress's own lips. The Count returned to his abode downcast and sorrowful; his disappointment more than wiped out all the pleasure he had received from his confab with the Prince's buffoon and confidant. Without heart to do anything or think of anything, he was wandering disconsolately about his picture-gallery when, some fifteen minutes later, he received a note conceived in these terms:

"Now that it is conceded, dear, good friend, that we are friends and nothing more, you must not come to see me oftener than thrice a week. In two weeks' time we will reduce these visits—which are and always will be so dear to my heart—to two a

month. If you wish to afford me pleasure, give what publicity you can to this seeming rupture ; if you would prove your gratitude for the love I once had for you, select another mistress. As for me, I am considering plans of dissipation : I expect to go out a great deal in society—perhaps I may even come across a clever, good-looking young man who will make me forget my troubles. Of course, as a friend, the warmest corner of my heart will always be reserved for you ; but I don't wish people longer to say that what I do is done at the dictate of your wisdom and experience, and I particularly wish it to be known that I have entirely ceased to exert any influence on your public conduct. In a word, my dear Count, I want you to believe me when I say that you will always be my dearest friend, but never anything more. Abandon, I entreat you, all idea of a return ; all is over between us. Trust in my eternal friendship."

This was the straw that broke the camel's back ; it was too much for the poor Count's endurance. He sat down and wrote an eloquent letter to the Prince resigning all his offices, then inclosed it to the Duchess with a note requesting her to read and forward it to the palace. A few minutes later

his resignation came back to him torn in four parts, and across one of the blank pages the Duchess had written in great characters, “*No, a thousand times no !*”

It would be difficult to find words to describe the Minister’s despair. “She is right,” he said to himself again and again ; “I admit she is right. My omission of those fatal words from the Prince’s letter was a terrible mistake ; it may be the cause of Fabrice’s death, and his will entail mine.” It was with a heart as heavy as lead that the Count, who did not wish to appear at the palace until his presence was officially desired, wrote with his own hand the *motu proprio* nominating Rassi a chevalier of the order of St. Paul and conferring on him nobility ; he supplemented it with a memorial half a page long advising the sovereign of the reasons of policy which had impelled him to the step. It gave him a sort of gloomy pleasure to make fair copies of the two documents and send them to the Duchess.

He wearied his brain with suppositions ; he tried to guess what would be the line of conduct in the future of the woman he loved. “She knows nothing of it herself,” he told himself ; “there is only one thing certain :

she will die rather than, having once formed a resolution, she will break it." A thing that added to his distress was that he could not bring himself to blame the Duchess. "She distinguished me by granting me her love; she has ceased to love me as a result of a fault, involuntary, it is true, but which may entail consequences most horrible; I have no right to complain." The next morning he learned that she had begun to go out in society again; she had shown herself the night before at all the houses whose doors were open. What would he have done had he met her in one of those salons? How could he have conversed with her? in what tone would he have addressed her? and how could he *not* have conversed with her?

The next day was a funereal one; it was generally rumored that Fabrice was to be executed, and the city was greatly disturbed. It was added that the Prince, from consideration for his birth and family, had been pleased to order that he should be beheaded.

"It is I who have killed him," said the Count; "I can never expect to see the Duchess more." But for all that, he could not refrain from passing before her door three times that day; true, he went on foot, that

he might not be observed. He even had the courage to write to her in his despair. He sent for Rassi twice; the Fiscal kept aloof. "The scoundrel is playing me false," thought the Count.

On the following day the aristocracy and even the bourgeoisie of Parma were agitated by three important items of news. Fabrice's execution was spoken of as being more certain than ever, and, strange as it may appear in view of such intelligence, the Duchess did not seem grievously afflicted. If there was any belief to be put in appearances, the regrets she accorded her young lover were not more than lukewarm. However, it was said, she did not fail to make the most of her pallor, which was the result of a somewhat serious indisposition that had overtaken her about the time of Fabrice's arrest. The worthy shopkeepers found these symptoms to agree with their knowledge of the stony-hearted ladies of the court. Still, from motives of decency and as a sacrifice to the *manes* of young Fabrice, she had broken with Count Mosca. "What shocking immorality!" the Jansenists of Parma exclaimed. But, incredible as it would seem, the Duchess already appeared more than half inclined to

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lend a listening ear to the cajoleries of the young dandies of the court. It had been noticed, among many other queer things, that she was very frisky with Count Baldi, the Raversi's present lover, and chaffed him unmercifully on his frequent visits to the château of Velleja. The small shopkeepers and the people generally were indignant at the prospect of the Vicar-general's execution, which they attributed to Count Mosca's jealousy. In court circles, too, the Count was the subject of much talk, but it was for the most part disrespectful and derisive. The third of the three items of intelligence that we mentioned was, indeed, neither more nor less than the reported resignation of the Count. Every one laughed at the absurd lover who, at the age of fifty-six, was throwing up a splendid position out of spite at being abandoned by a heartless woman, who, moreover, had long been bestowing her favors on a younger man. The Archbishop alone had the sense, or rather the generosity, to see that honor forbade the Count to remain prime minister to a government that was about to cut off the head—and without so much as asking his opinion on the subject—of a young man who was his protégé. The

news of the Count's resignation had the effect of curing General Fabio Conti of his gout, as will be told at the proper season, when we come to speak of the way in which poor Fabrice was spending his time in the citadel while the people of the city were going about asking one another when the execution was to be.

The next day the Count had a call from Bruno, the faithful agent whom he had despatched to Bologna. His feelings had almost got the better of him as the man entered his study; seeing him, he was reminded of his comparatively happy state when he sent him on his mission, when the breach with the Duchess had not seemed irreparable. Bruno had just come in from Bologna, where he had made no fresh discoveries; he had seen nothing of Ludovic, whom the podestate of Castelnovo had detained in the village lockup.

"I am going to send you back to Bologna," said the Count; "the Duchess will know no peace until she is acquainted with all the circumstances of the arrest. You will go to the corporal of gendarmes commanding the post at Castelnovo—

"But stay!" cried the Count, interrupting himself. "Start this instant for Lombardy

and scatter money with open hands among all our agents there. My wish is to obtain from all those people reports of the most encouraging nature." Bruno, when he had fully mastered the object of his mission, sat down to write his letters of credit. As the Count was giving him his final instructions he was handed an extremely well-written letter, but which breathed deceit in every line; it might have emanated from one friend writing to another to ask a service. The friend in this instance was no other than the Prince. Having heard certain rumors of an intention to resign, he begged his friend, Count Mosca, not to leave the ministry; he entreated him in the name of friendship and their common country's peril; he ordered him as his sovereign lord and master. He added that, the king of —— having placed at his disposal two cordons of his order, he had retained one for himself and sent the other to his dear Count Mosca.

"That animal will be the cause of my perdition!" roared the enraged Count in presence of the astounded Bruno. "He thinks to gull me with those same hypocritical phrases that we have so often contrived together to befool some simpleton." He declined the

offered order, and in his reply spoke of his physical condition as being such as to afford him little hope that he should be able much longer to perform the onerous duties of his office. He was furious, beside himself, and when, a moment later, Rassi was announced the Fiscal was accorded the reception of a blackamoor.

“So, because I have ennobled you, you think you are at liberty to treat me to a display of your insolence! Why were you not here yesterday to make your acknowledgments, as was your bounden duty, Master Clodhopper?”

Rassi was proof against insults. That was the manner in which he was addressed daily by the Prince; but he was bent on being a baron and justified himself with considerable spirit. Nothing was easier.

“The Prince placed me at a table yesterday morning and kept me there all day; I was unable to leave the palace. He gave me a lot of diplomatic documents to copy, such senseless, absurd stuff that I really think his only object was to keep me prisoner. When I got away at last, in a starving condition, about five o’clock, he ordered me to go straight home and remain there until morn-

ing. I saw two of his spies, who happened to be known to me, patrolling my street until nearly midnight. This morning, at the earliest moment possible, I sent for a carriage, which set me down in front of the cathedral. I alighted very deliberately; then, entering the church, I darted through it at my best speed, came out on the other street, and here I am. There is no one in the world whom I so ardently desire to please just at this present moment as Your Excellency."

"I would have you know, you old reprobate, that I am not the dupe of your cock-and-bull stories. You refused to speak of Fabrice day before yesterday; I respected your scruples and your oaths of secrecy—although I am sure I don't know what respect should be accorded to *your* oaths. To-day I want the truth. What is there in the rumors which have it that the young man is to be executed for the murder of the actor Giletti?"

"There is no one more capable than I of explaining those rumors to Your Excellency, seeing that it was I who set them afloat at His Highness's instigation; and, now I think of it, it was probably to keep me from telling tales out of school that he kept me prisoner all day yesterday. He knew that I would not

fail to bring my cross to you and ask you to fasten it in my buttonhole."

"Come to the point, and fewer words!" exclaimed the Minister.

"There is no doubt that the Prince would have liked to have a sentence of death against the Signor del Dongo ; but, as you are aware, all he secured from the judges was twenty years' imprisonment in irons, commuted by himself to twelve years on the day following the trial, with a diet of bread and water on Fridays, and some other religious observances."

"It is for the very reason that his sentence calls for imprisonment only that these rumors of an approaching execution alarm me so ; I remember the death of Count Palanza, so artistically managed by you."

"I should have had the cross then !" exclaimed Rassi, nowise disconcerted. "I should have struck while the iron was hot, when our man was eager for Palanza's death. I was a blockhead, and it is on account of my experience then that I take the liberty of warning you not to follow my example now." (The parallel was not particularly pleasing to the Count, who had some difficulty in restraining himself from kicking his interlocutor.)

“In the first place,” continued Rassi, with the logic of a lawyer and the perfect assurance of the buffoon insensible to insult—“in the first place, there is not the remotest possibility of del Dongo being put to death: the Prince would never dare; the times are changed! and then, too, I, who, thanks to you, have been ennobled and am hoping to be made a baron, would not lend my countenance to the measure. It is from me alone, as Your Excellency is aware, that the headsmen receives his orders, and you can remain assured that such orders will never be issued by the Chevalier Rassi against the Signor del Dongo.”

“You will be acting wisely in so doing,” said the Count, eyeing him severely.

“Ah, but we must distinguish,” Rassi replied, with a smile. “I have to do only with official executions, and if the Monsignor should die of a colic you must not charge it to me. The Prince is terribly incensed—I know not why—against the Sanseverina” (three days before Rassi would have said “the Duchess,” but in common with the rest of the city he knew of the rupture with the Prime Minister). The Count was struck by the suppression of the title in such a mouth,

and it may be imagined whether he was gratified or not; he darted at the Fiscal a look of bitterest hatred. "My dear angel," he said to himself, "I have no other way of showing my love than by obeying blindly your commands."

"I am free to confess," he said to the Fiscal, "that I don't feel a tremendous interest in Her Grace the Duchess's various caprices; but inasmuch as she has seen fit to make me in some sort responsible for that young scapegrace Fabrice—who might better have remained at Naples instead of coming here to muddle our affairs—I don't mean he shall lose his head if I can help it, and I pledge you my word that within a week from the day he steps outside the prison you shall be a baron."

"That is equivalent to saying that I shall not be a baron until twelve years have rolled round; for the Prince is furious, and his hatred for the Duchess is so bitter that he tries to hide it."

"That is very kind of him; but what need has he to hide his hatred now that the lady is no longer protected by his prime minister? But I do not wish to be accused of treachery or underhand dealing; it was I who brought

the Duchess to this country, and if Fabrice dies in prison you won't be baron, but you will in all likelihood be murdered in your bed. But that is a trifle that we need not speak of. I have been making an inventory of my fortune, and find I am barely worth twenty thousand francs a year. I am thinking of writing the sovereign, humbly tendering my resignation. I have some hopes of finding employment at the court of Naples; that great and brilliant city will offer me distractions that I am sadly in need of just now, and that I cannot expect to find in such a hole as Parma. I shall only remain here long enough to enable you to secure for me the hand of the Princess Isota—" and so the conversation ran on *ad infinitum*. As Rassi was rising to go the Count said to him, negligently:

"You know there is a rumor that Fabrice has deceived me, in that he was the Duchess's lover. I do not believe the report, and to show how little importance I attach to it, here is a purse that I wish you to transmit to Fabrice."

"But, Your Excellency," said Rassi in dismay, looking at the purse, "it contains a very large sum of money, and the regulations—"

"It may be a very large sum for you, my

dear sir," replied the Count, with an air of supreme contempt. "When a bourgeois like you in an unusual fit of liberality sends money to his friend in prison, he thinks he is ruining himself if he gives ten sequins. I desire that Fabrice receive these six thousand francs, and also that the palace know nothing of the transaction."

As the frightened Fiscal was about to reply the Count took him by the shoulders and roughly pushed him from the room. "To men like him," he said, "power expresses itself in insolence." With which words the great statesman gave way to a proceeding so ridiculous that we hesitate to mention it. He strode across the room to his desk, and taking from it a miniature of the Duchess, covered it with passionate kisses. "Forgive me, dear angel," he cried, "that I did not with my own hands hurl from the window the cur who dared to speak your name with such familiarity. If I compel myself to be patient it is only in obedience to your orders—and his debt will not be the smaller for the delay!"

After a long conversation with the portrait, the Count, whose heart was very heavy, had a strange idea, and proceeded to carry

it into execution with almost childish eagerness. He donned a coat adorned with all his orders and went off to pay a visit to the old Princess Isota. He had never before thought of calling on her except at New Year's time. He found her surrounded by many dogs of different degrees of ugliness, and tricked out in her best, with all her diamonds, as if she had been going to court. The Count having expressed his fear that he was interfering with the arrangements of Her Highness, who was apparently intending to go out, she replied that a princess of Parma owed it to herself to be always *en grande tenue*. For the first time since his misfortune the Count felt an inclination to laugh. "I did well in coming here," he said to himself, "and I must file my declaration this very day." The Princess had been delighted to see her drawing-room graced by the presence of a prime minister and a man so renowned for cleverness; the poor old maid was not accustomed to such distinguished visitors. The Count opened the conversation with an artfully worded preface, in which he spoke of the immense distance that separates an ordinary gentleman from the members of a royal family.

"There is a distinction to be noted, though,"

said the Princess: "the daughter of a king of France, for instance, has no hope of ever coming to the throne; but in the family of Parma the case is different. That is why we Farnèse feel it our duty always to maintain a certain dignity in externals; and I, poor Princess that I am, cannot say with any certainty that you may not be my prime minister some day."

The idea, by its oddity and improbability, for a second time gave a fillip to the poor Count's merriment.

On leaving the Princess Isota, who had blushed rosy red on hearing His Excellency's declaration, the latter met a messenger from the palace; the Prince desired to see him immediately.

"Tell him I am sick," replied the Minister, delighted to have it in his power to snub his sovereign.—"So, you will treat me like a dog, will you, and then expect me to serve you!" he hotly exclaimed. "It is time you learned, my Prince, that it is not sufficient in these days to sit on the throne by the will of Providence; to be a successful despot requires strength of character and a certain degree of intelligence."

After dismissing the messenger, who was

a good deal scandalized to see a sick man apparently so hale and hearty, the Count thought it would be well to pay a visit to the two men at court who were reputed to be most influential with General Fabio Conti. The Governor of the citadel was accused of having once rid himself of a personal enemy, a captain in the army, by the use of the *aquetta* of Perugia—a circumstance that gave the Minister food for reflection and did not contribute to his cheerfulness.

The Count knew that during the past week the Duchess had been spending extravagant sums to procure intelligence of what was going on within the fortress, but with small success so far as he could hear; it was too soon as yet for the jailers to relax their vigilance. We shall not weary the reader with a description of the unhappy woman's numerous attempts at bribery; she was seconded by faithful and devoted agents in every walk of life. But whatever may be the deficiencies of small despotic courts, no one can accuse them of remissness in guarding their political prisoners. The only effect produced by the Duchess's gold was to secure the dismissal of eight or ten men employed about the citadel in various capacities.





XVIII

SO, with the best will in the world to help the prisoner, the Duchess and the Prime Minister had thus far been able to accomplish almost nothing for him. The Prince's resentment continued undiminished, while the court and the populace as well were against Fabrice and not sorry to see him in disgrace: he had been too fortunate. In spite of the gold that she scattered with lavish hands, the Duchess had not advanced a step in the siege of the citadel. Not a day passed but the Marquise Raversi or the Chevalier Riscara had information of some new plot to communicate to General Conti. They held up the hands of the weak old man.

As we have already said, on the day of his arrest Fabrice was first conducted to the palace of the Governor. This was a hand-

some little structure, built in the last century from designs by Vanvitelli, who reared it on the platform of the great round tower at a height of a hundred and eighty feet. From the windows of this miniature palace, perched on the summit of the massive tower like the hump on the back of a camel, Fabrice had a view of the surrounding country and the distant Alps. He could trace, winding past the foot of the citadel, the course of the Parma, a brawling mountain torrent which, bending abruptly to the right four leagues below the city, dashes off at a tangent to mingle its waters with the Po's. Beyond the left bank of the stream, which here and there expands into lakes and pools that appear like mirrors set in the verdurous landscape, his delighted eye could count each separate peak in the mighty wall with which the Alps encompass northern Italy. The summits, on which the snow never melts, even in the month of August (the period at which our story has now arrived), lend a suggestion of grateful coolness to the parched fields; although they are distant more than thirty leagues from Parma, the eye has no difficulty in tracing their contours. The extensive prospect from the charming palace of the Governor was on

the southern side partially cut off by the Farnèse Tower, in which a chamber was being hurriedly made ready for Fabrice's occupancy. This second tower, as the reader may remember, had been erected on the platform of the great tower for the accommodation of an hereditary prince who, unlike Hippolytus, son of Theseus, had not refused to listen to the soft speeches of a young mother-in-law. The princess died a mysterious death within a few hours after the discovery of her escapade; the young man did not regain his liberty until he ascended his father's throne, seventeen years afterward. This Farnèse tower, a gloomy and unprepossessing structure outwardly, in which Fabrice was installed after a delay of an hour or less, rises to a height of fifty feet above the platform of the great tower, and fairly bristles with lightning-conductors. The prince to whom was due the erection of the conspicuous structure wished, strangely enough, to make his subjects believe that it dated back to ancient times; it was for that reason he called it the Farnèse tower. It was forbidden to mention it in conversation, and yet from all quarters of the city of Parma and the adjacent plain the masons could be seen working away at

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the walls of the pentagonal edifice. In testimony of its antiquity there was placed above the main entrance-way, two feet wide by four high, a magnificent bas-relief representing the famous general Alexander Farnèse driving Henri IV from the gates of Paris. The building, so conspicuous an object in the landscape, consists of a *rez-de-chaussée* at least forty paces long, of proportionate width, and thickly set with squat, sturdy columns—for the immense room is disproportionately low, its ceiling not being over fifteen feet in height. It is used as a guard-room, and in the center is a light spiral staircase of wrought-iron, scarce two feet wide, built around one of the pillars. By this staircase, which vibrated beneath the tread of his guard of turnkeys, Fabrice reached a magnificent suite of rooms, twenty feet high, forming the first story. They had once been furnished with the extreme of luxury for the young prince who had been their occupant for the seventeen best years of his life. At one of the extremities of the suite the new prisoner was shown a noble chapel; the walls and vaulted ceiling were faced with black marble; along the black walls, but separated from them by a little space, on either side were rows of

stately columns, also of black marble, while from above death's-heads and cross-bones, exquisitely carved in white marble, grinned down on the beholder. "That is an invention of the enemy that can't kill a man," Fabrice said to himself; "but what devilish spite they exhibit in showing me all this!"

Another spiral staircase, similar to the first, afforded access to the second story of the prison, the rooms of which were about fifteen feet high; and it was here that for the last two years General Fabio Conti had been demonstrating his engineering talent. In the first place, stout iron gratings had been affixed to all the windows of the rooms, in which the prince's domestics had formerly been quartered, and which were more than thirty feet above the stone flags that formed the roof of the great tower. The means of approach to these chambers, each of which had two windows, was by a dark corridor running through the center of the building; and in this narrow passage Fabrice counted in succession three doors, formed of thick iron bars and reaching to the ceiling. The drawings, plans, and specifications of these admirable inventions had been the means of securing for the General a weekly audience

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from his master during two years. A conspirator confined in one of these rooms would have no reason for complaining of inhuman treatment, and yet he was cut off entirely from communication with the outer world and could not make the slightest movement without being heard. But the General's crowning achievement in the engineering line—his *magnum opus*, on which he particularly prided himself and built his hopes of becoming minister of police—was a sort of prison within a prison which may be thus described: he had introduced into each of the chambers great oaken beams, three feet square and which could be used at a pinch as benches; on these beams he had erected a cabin of very thin, resonant boards, ten feet in height and adjoining the wall only on that side where the windows were. On the three other sides ran a corridor, four feet wide, between the original wall of the chamber, composed of huge blocks of granite, and the wooden walls of the cabin. These latter, formed of three thicknesses of walnut, oak, and pine planking, were clenched with innumerable nails and further secured by massive iron bolts.

It was to one of these rooms, monuments

of General Fabio Conti's ingenuity and finished within the year, known as the *Chamber of Passive Obedience*, that Fabrice was conducted. His first impulse led him to the windows. The prospect from between the iron gratings was magnificent; only a small angle of the horizon toward the northwest was shut off by the peaked roof of the Governor's pretty palace, which was but two stories high, the ground floor being devoted to the administrative offices. Fabrice's attention was first drawn to a window of the second story, in which were hung numerous handsome cages containing birds of every description. He amused himself by listening to their notes and watching the little creatures' movements while the turnkeys were busying themselves about the room. The window of the aviary was not more than twenty-five feet distant from that at which he stood, and was five or six beneath it, so that he looked down upon the birds.

There was a moon that evening, and as Fabrice entered his cell it rose majestically above the Alps, on his right hand, in the direction of Treviso. It was only half-past eight o'clock; the western sky was full of brilliant color, orange, gold, and crimson,

against which were outlined like dusky sentinels Mount Viso and the other Alpine peaks which, commencing at Nice, extend to Mount Cenis and Turin. Fabrice, forgetting his troubles for the time, was affected and charmed by the grandiose spectacle. "It is here, then, in this world of enchantment, that Clelia Conti lives; with her gentle, pensive nature she should enjoy this landscape more keenly than another; it is as if one were in the heart of the mountains, a hundred leagues from Parma." It was not until he had spent more than two hours in contemplating those scenes that appealed so strongly to his imagination, also, it must be confessed, occasionally allowing his eyes to rest on the Governor's little palace, that our hero, suddenly remembering himself, started and exclaimed, "But is this a prison? Is this what I have been looking forward to with such dread?" Instead of bemoaning his fate and looking for subjects of complaint, he yielded himself to the charm of his surroundings.

A tremendous uproar suddenly recalled him to the realities of life: the wooden walls of his cage were violently shaken, while the excited barking of a dog and a succession of little shrill cries added to the confusion.

“What! already an opportunity to escape?” thought Fabrice. A moment later he was laughing as perhaps never a man laughed in prison. By order of the Governor the jailers had brought up with them a dog of English breed, an ill-tempered brute whose duty it was to guard the guardians, and who was to be confined for the night in the narrow corridor that encircled three sides of Fabrice’s cell. The space, three feet high, between the flagstones of the room and the thin floor of boards of the prisoner’s cage was to be the dog’s and jailers’ sleeping-place.

Now the Chamber of Passive Obedience had been occupied by swarms of immense rats, which on Fabrice’s arrival scattered and fled in every direction. The dog, a cross between the spaniel and the fox-terrier, was not handsome, but he atoned for that defect by his activity. He had been fastened to a ring in the stone pavement under the wooden cabin, and when he heard the rats scampering about him in that impudent manner he tugged at his chain so violently that he slipped his collar. Then ensued the decisive battle whose alarums had aroused our hero from his not unpleasant reveries. Those of the rodents that had escaped the first on-

slaught of the enemy having taken refuge in the cabin, Towzer in hot pursuit dashed up the six steps from the pavement. The scrimmage that followed was of the liveliest character and defies description ; the wooden cage was shaken until it seemed it must collapse. Fabrice laughed until the tears came. Grillo, the turnkey, equally diverted, had closed the door. The dog had nothing to hinder him in his pursuit, for the room was entirely bare of furniture ; the only refuge that offered itself to the terrified animals was a small sheet-iron stove in one corner of the cell. When Towzer was finally victorious over all his foes, Fabrice called him up, patted him, and secured his friendship. "He will be less likely to grab me by the leg if he should ever see me trying to scale a wall," he said to himself. But this reflection was not the result of any well-defined policy ; he simply found pleasure in playing with the dog. Owing to some strange occult influence that he was unable to explain, his heart was light within him.

"What is your name?" he asked the turnkey when he had finished caressing the dog.

"Grillo, Your Excellency's very humble servant so far as the regulations permit."

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“Well, my good Grillo, a fellow named Giletti attempted to murder me on the high-road; I defended myself and killed him, and I would do it again under the same circumstances; but that is no reason why I should not make the best of matters and enjoy myself as long as I continue to be your guest. I wish you would obtain permission from your superiors and fetch me a supply of clean linen from the Sanseverina palace—and bring me, also, a good provision of Asti.”

Asti is a reasonably good, sparkling wine made in Piedmont, the country of Alfieri, and which is held in high esteem, particularly by that class of connoisseurs which embraces jailers and turnkeys among its numbers. Eight or ten of these gentlemen were just then engaged in removing to Fabrice's apartment some antique and highly decorated articles of furniture from the prince's quarters on the floor beneath; the mention of the Asti evidently produced a favorable impression on their minds. With all they could do Fabrice's situation that first night was not a comfortable one; but the only thing that seemed to worry him was the lack of a bottle of his favorite tippie. “He seems like a real nice gentleman,” declared the jailers as

they left the room; "it is to be hoped that the bosses will allow his friends to send him plenty of money."

When he was alone and somewhat himself again after all the excitement: "Is it possible that this is a prison?" said Fabrice to himself, with a glance at the wide horizon from Treviso to Monte Viso, the snow-covered ranges of the Alps, the stars, and all the glorious landscape, "and a first night in prison at that! I can conceive that Clelia Conti is happy in this aërial solitude; the dweller here is a thousand leagues above the petty cares and jealousies that distract our minds on earth. I wonder if those birds beneath my window are hers—if they are I shall see her. Will she blush when she sees me?" And while debating this important question with himself sleep came to the prisoner at a late hour of the night.

When morning came after his first night in prison, during which he had not experienced a moment's impatience, Fabrice found he had no one to talk to but Towzer, the English dog. Grillo continued to look at him with friendly eyes, but orders from below had rendered him mute as a fish; neither had he brought the clean linen or the Asti.

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“ Shall I see Clelia ? ” Fabrice asked himself when his eyes were fairly open. “ Do those birds belong to her ? ” The birds began to chirp and twitter ; no other sound reached his ears at that elevation. It was a novel and pleasurable sensation to our hero, that deep and uninterrupted silence ; he listened delightedly to the intermittent, piping cries with which his feathered neighbors saluted the new day. “ If they are hers, she will not fail at some time during the morning to visit that room of which my window commands a view. ” And while contemplating the majestic mountain-ranges, opposed to the lower slopes of which the citadel of Parma seemed to advance defiantly like a hostile outwork, his looks constantly reverted to the handsome cages of mahogany and lemon-wood that occupied the center of the cheerful, brightly lighted apartment used as an aviary. Fabrice learned later that this was the only room on the second floor of the palace that was shaded from eleven o’clock until four ; it was indebted for this to the proximity of the Farnèse Tower.

“ Perhaps the mistress intrusts the care of her pets to a maid, ” Fabrice reflected. “ If so, how disappointed I shall be on seeing her

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red, blowzy face instead of the pensive and modest countenance whose memory I carry in my heart, which perhaps will blush a little at sight of me ! But if I see Clelia, will she condescend to see me ? Faith, I shall have to attract her attention, and must not be too particular as to the means. I should be allowed some privileges in my situation ; besides, we are companions in solitude up here, and so remote from the world ! I am a prisoner, one of those unfortunates whom General Conti and his likes are pleased to call their inferiors, forsooth ! But she has so much intelligence, or so much soul, rather, according to the Count's opinion, that perhaps, as he says, she despises her father's occupation ; that would account for her melancholy. But I am not an entire stranger to her, after all. With what grace and modesty she saluted me yesterday evening ! I remember saying to her, at the time we met near Como, ' I expect some day to visit Parma to inspect your picture-galleries ; do you think you will remember my name so long ? ' Has she forgotten, I wonder ? She was but a young girl then.

" But, by the way," thought Fabrice, in surprise, his cogitations suddenly seizing the

reins and shooting off in another direction, "I am forgetting to be angry. Can it be that I am one of those intrepid souls of which antiquity has afforded a few examples to the world? Am I a hero without knowing it? How is it? I, who had such a mortal terror of a prison, here I am *in* prison, and don't seem the least bit cast down! It is like a man seating himself in the dentist's chair; the anticipation is worse than the reality. What! must I appeal to my reasoning faculties to be conscious of the gravity of my situation? For Blanès said that my imprisonment was as likely to last ten years as ten months. I wonder if it is the novelty of my position that neutralizes the concern I ought to feel, but don't? Perhaps this unreasonable and unaccountable equanimity will vanish suddenly and be supplanted by the somber melancholy that the circumstances of my case demand.

"At all events, it is a most extraordinary thing to be in prison and have to argue with one's self to keep one's spirits down. Faith, I think I shall stand on my original proposition — perhaps I am a great man."

The young man's meditations were interrupted by the entrance of the carpenter of

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the jail, who came to take the measurements for screens for the windows; this important particular had been overlooked owing to the fact that the room had as yet never contained a prisoner.

"So," said Fabrice to himself, "I am to be deprived of my magnificent prospect." Here was a privation at last that gave him a legitimate cause for grumbling.

"How!" he suddenly exclaimed, addressing the carpenter; "am I to see no more of those pretty birds?"

"Ah, the signorina's birds, that she loves so well!" said the man, in a kindly tone; "there are few here to admire them."

Conversation was forbidden to the carpenter no less than to the turnkeys, but the man had pity on the captive's youth and misfortune. He explained that the huge screens, starting from the window-sills and flaring outward as they rose, would shut off the prisoner's view of everything except the heavens. "That is done for the sake of the moral effect," he said; "to produce a salutary dejection in the prisoners and give them time to reflect on the error of their ways. It was the General, too, who in his foresight had the idea of removing all the glass from

the windows and replacing it with oiled paper."

Fabrice was pleased with the epigrammatic turn of the conversation, so rare in Italy.

"I should be very glad to have a bird to relieve my tedium here; I am passionately fond of birds. See if you can't buy me one from the Signorina Clelia Conti's maid."

"Ah, you know her then," exclaimed the mechanic, "that you speak her name so correctly?"

"Who does not know by hearsay of the celebrated beauty? But I have had the honor to meet her at court on several occasions."

"The poor young lady does not find much to amuse her here," continued the carpenter; "she spends most of her time with her birds. This morning she has been buying some handsome orange-trees, and has had them set out beside the tower door, right under your window. You could see them if it were not for the cornice." There was valuable information for Fabrice in these words, and he manufactured a pretext for giving the carpenter some money.

"That is two crimes that I am guilty of at once," said the man: "speaking to Your Ex-

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cellency and taking Your Excellency's money. When I return with the screens day after to-morrow I will have a bird in my pocket ; if I should not be alone I will contrive to let it escape, by accident. I will also bring you a breviary if I can ; it must distress you to be unable to recite your prayers."

"The birds are hers, then," said Fabrice to himself when he was alone ; "but in two days I shall see no more of them." An expression of regret and disappointment settled on his face. But at last, about noon, to his inexpressible delight after his long watch and many expectant looks, Clelia came to look after her pets. Fabrice remained motionless as a statue, scarce venturing to breathe, his hands tightly grasping the bars of the window against which his face was pressed. He noticed that she did not raise her eyes to look at him ; but her movements had an air of constraint, like those of a person who feels that he is being observed. Even if she had wished to do so, the poor girl could not have forgotten the charming smile that she had seen, a few hours before, playing on the prisoner's lips as the gendarmes conducted him from the guard-room.

Although she seemed to be making strenu-

ous efforts to control herself, she blushed perceptibly as she approached the window of the aviary. Fabrice had for an instant a half-formed idea of tapping on the iron bars of his window to attract her attention; but the indelicacy of the proceeding inspired him with disgust. "If I were to do such a thing she would probably send her maid to feed the birds hereafter, and it would serve me just right." Such considerateness would never have occurred to him at Novara or Naples.

He followed her movements with eager, wistful eyes. "She will surely go away and never condescend to look at this window and its poor occupant," he said to himself. But as she returned from the farther end of the room, where, owing to his more elevated position, objects were perfectly discernible to Fabrice, she could not resist the temptation of raising her eyes and casting a shy glance at him, to which the young man thought himself authorized in replying with a bow. "Are we not alone here together in the world?" he said to himself by way of encouragement. The young girl stood still and lowered her eyes; then she raised them again, slowly and evidently at the cost of a great effort, and made a distant courtesy to the prisoner. But

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she could not impose silence on those speaking eyes : for the space of a moment, probably unconsciously to her, they expressed the liveliest pity. She blushed so vividly that the rosy hues extended to her neck and shoulders, from which, owing to the extreme heat, she had removed a scarf of black lace on entering the room. The involuntary look of admiration with which Fabrice replied to her salutation added to the girl's confusion. "How happy it would make that poor woman," she said to herself, having in mind the Duchess, "if she could but see him for an instant as I do now !"

Fabrice had a faint hope that there would be another exchange of salutations at her departure ; but Clelia disappointed him by retreating deliberately and in good order from cage to cage until she reached the door, through which she disappeared. Fabrice stood gazing on the spot whence she had vanished ; he was another man.

From that moment he taxed his ingenuity to devise ways and means whereby he might continue to see her, even after the erection before his window of the odious screen that would cut off his view of the Governor's palace.

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The night previous, before going to bed, he had taken the precaution to conceal the larger portion of the gold he had about him in some of the numerous rat-holes that adorned his chamber. "To-night I must hide my watch. Have I not heard that, given patience and a watchspring, one may cut through wood and even iron? I might saw a hole in that screen." Although several hours were consumed in concealing his watch, the time did not seem long to him; he was thinking of the various means by which he might best attain his end, and of his acquirements in carpentry. "If I have only the skill to do it right," he said to himself, "I can saw out a square from the oaken plank of the screen, down near where it meets the window-sill, in such a way that the piece may be taken out and replaced at will; and if the edges of the cut join neatly, no one will detect the fraud. Perhaps Grillo will consent to be blind to my little manœuvre if I give him enough money." All Fabrice's happiness was thenceforth bound up in the successful execution of this project; he could think of nothing else. "If I can only contrive to see her I shall be happy—no, that's not so," he said to himself; "she must see that I see her." All night long devices of

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carpentry were chasing one another through his head ; he had not one thought for the court of Parma, the Prince's wrath, or his own uncertain prospects. Neither, to his discredit it must be said, did he worry over the alarm and distress which he must have known the Duchess was suffering on his account. He awaited impatiently the coming of the morrow, but the carpenter did not show himself ; perhaps there were suspicions as to his fidelity in the prison. Another man came in his place, a repulsive, ill-conditioned fellow, who, in response to Fabrice's blandishments and agreeable speeches, answered only with a surly growl. Some of the Duchess's numerous attempts to open communication with Fabrice had been discovered by the Marquise Raversi's agents, and as she took pains to send daily reports and admonitions to General Fabio Conti, the old warrior was kept in a constant state of alarm, distrust, and offended dignity. The six sentinels in the great Hall of the Hundred Columns in the basement were relieved every eight hours ; the Governor posted a turnkey at each of the three iron gates in the corridor of the prison ; and poor Grillo, who alone had access to the prisoner, was only permitted to leave the pre-

cinets of the Farnèse Tower once a week, a detail that did not at all please the worthy turnkey. He vented his ill humor on Fabrice, who had the good sense to make no other answer than, "Plenty of Asti, my friend, plenty of Asti!" and give him some money.

"We are forbidden even to receive that, our friend and comforter in all our troubles!" exclaimed the indignant Grillo, in a voice that barely reached the prisoner's ear. "I ought not to take it, but I don't care, I will. I can't tell you the first thing about anything. You must be an awfully bad man; the whole citadel has been turned topsy-turvy on your account, and Madame the Duchess's little games have already resulted in three of us being discharged."

"Will the screen be ready by noon?" was the great question that agitated Fabrice's mind all that long morning. He counted the quarters as they were sounded one by one by the great bell of the citadel. At last, just as the third quarter past eleven was striking, Clelia appeared to feed her birds; the screen had not arrived. Cruel necessity had so stimulated Fabrice's audacity, and the danger of seeing her no more appeared to him so imminent, that he had the effrontery

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to look at her and imitate with his finger the action of a man sawing plank. As soon as she perceived this seditious indication of the prisoner she bowed slightly and retired.

“What!” said the surprised Fabrice, “can she be so unreasonable as to take a gesture dictated by imperious necessity for a senseless familiarity? I wished to ask her that, while feeding her birds, she would condescend to look occasionally at the window of the prison, even after it shall be concealed by a great wooden shutter; I wished to let her know that I mean to do all that mortal man can do to obtain a glimpse of her now and then. Heavens! can it be that she won’t come to-morrow on account of that imprudent gesture?” This apprehension, which interfered with Fabrice’s slumbers that night, was fully realized: the next day Clelia had not appeared at three o’clock, at which time the workmen had completed their task and placed in position two enormous screens before the young man’s windows. The different parts were raised from the roof of the great tower by the assistance of ropes and pulleys made fast to the iron bars of the windows. It is true that Clelia, from her hiding-place behind her curtains, had watched with

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anxiety the proceedings of the workmen; she was perfectly aware of Fabrice's trouble and distress, but none the less had the courage to keep the promise she had made herself.

Clelia was a little Liberal of the deepest dye; in her girlhood she had listened to and assimilated the Liberal ideas promulgated by the friends of her father, whose only thought was to better his position. At the same time she experienced a feeling of loathing and contempt for the slippery, servile nature of the courtier, whence resulted an aversion to marriage. Since Fabrice's arrival she had been tortured by remorse. "See my unfilial heart," she said to herself, "siding with those who would betray my father! He dared, before my eyes, to make the gesture of one sawing through a door! But then it is said on every hand that his death is near—tomorrow may be the appointed, the fatal day! for what may we not expect from the monsters who rule over us? What gentleness, what noble serenity in those eyes that perhaps will soon be closed forever! Good God, what anguish must the Duchess suffer! It is said she has abandoned hope. I feel as if I could imitate the brave Charlotte Corday :

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go to the Prince's palace and plant a dagger in his heart."

During the whole of this his third day in prison Fabrice was wretched and gloomy, but only because he had seen nothing of Clelia. "At any rate," he cried, "I might have told her that I loved her"—for he had arrived at that discovery. "No, it is not heroism that makes me forget the annoyances of prison life and gives the lie to old Blanès's prophecies; I cannot lay claim to any such distinction. In spite of myself, I am continually thinking of the look of tender pity that Clelia let fall on me as the soldiers were conducting me from the guard-room; that look has obliterated all my past life. Who would have thought I should meet with eyes so gentle and true in such a spot as this, and at the moment when my own eyes were contaminated by the sight of Barbone and the Governor? Among those vile creatures it was like a glimpse of heaven. And how can I help loving the fair girl and trying to see more of her? No, it is not magnanimity that makes me indifferent to all the petty vexations I am exposed to here." Fabrice's imagination, contemplating the various possibilities of what might be in store for him,

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paused at that of being set at liberty. "I have no doubt the Duchess's affection will compass miracles for me. But should she succeed in securing my release I hardly know whether I should thank her. This is a spot to which one does not willingly return; and once outside these walls, and moving in different circles as we do, I should scarce see anything of Clelia. And, after all, in what am I the worse for being locked up here? If only Clelia would not be angry with me, what should I have to ask from Providence?"

An immense idea occurred to him on the evening of the day when he had missed seeing his pretty neighbor. With the metal cross of the rosary that is given to each prisoner on his arrival he began, with good promise of success, to drill a hole in the shutter. "It may be imprudent," he said to himself before setting to work; "did n't the carpenters say that the painters are to be here to-morrow? What will they say on discovering a great hole in the screen? But unless I am imprudent I shall stand no chance of seeing her to-morrow. What, go a whole day without seeing her when I have an opportunity, and that when she parted from me in anger!"

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Fabrice's imprudence met with its reward; after fifteen hours of continuous labor he saw Clelia, and, to add to his felicity, as she did not suppose that he could see her, she remained for a long time motionless and with eyes fixed on the screen. He had abundant time to read in her eyes all the signs of tenderest pity. As the time drew near for her to retire it was plain that she was neglecting her birds that she might have a few minutes longer to contemplate the window. Her feelings were deeply troubled; she was thinking of the Duchess, for whom in her distress she had felt such compassion, but whom she was now beginning to hate. She could not understand the profound melancholy that was beginning to take possession of her; she was vexed with herself. Two or three times while she was there Fabrice was strongly tempted to pound on the shutter; it seemed that his happiness was not complete so long as he did not testify to Clelia that he was looking at her. "But if she knew I was watching her by stealth," he said to himself, "in her timid, modest nature she would doubtless go away and come no more."

He had better luck next day (what miserable little trifles will make a lover happy!):

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while she was sorrowfully contemplating the window he passed a bit of wire through the opening he had made in the shutter, and made signals to her which she evidently understood, at least to the extent of the meaning they were intended to convey—I am here, I see you!

During the succeeding days Fabrice was less fortunate. He had been planning to cut out from the shutter a square of plank of the size of a man's hand that could be removed and replaced at pleasure, and that would permit of his seeing and being seen—that is to say, of telling, by signs at least, what was passing in his mind; but he found that the noise of the rude little saw which he had manufactured from his watchspring with the assistance of the cross from the rosary aroused the suspicions of Grillo, who was almost constantly in the room. He thought he could see, however, that Clelia's severity diminished in proportion as the obstacles to their communication increased: he observed that she no longer lowered her eyes or affected to look at her birds when he attempted to make his presence known by means of his paltry bit of wire; it gave him pleasure to note that she never failed to enter the aviary

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at precisely a quarter to twelve, and he had the presumption to believe that he was the cause of that exactitude. Why? The idea seemed fantastic, but to the lover things that to the indifferent are veriest trifles are circumstances of mighty moment; he draws from them all sorts of inferences. For instance, now that the prisoner was invisible to Clelia, she would raise her eyes to his window almost immediately on entering the aviary. This was that period of gloom when no one in Parma doubted that Fabrice's days were numbered; he alone was ignorant of the universal rumor; but the thought was never absent from Clelia's mind, and why should she reproach herself for feeling interested in the young man's fate? He was about to die! and in the sacred cause of liberty!—for it was too absurd to suppose that a del Dongo was to be put to death merely for killing a mountebank. True, this fascinating youth had an attachment for another woman. Clelia was profoundly miserable; and without acknowledging to herself the precise nature of the interest she felt in him: "If they cut off his head," she said to herself, "I shall certainly take refuge in a convent and never during my lifetime will appear at court

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again—I hate it! The smooth-tongued, smiling butchers!”

On the eighth day of Fabrice's captivity her sense of decorum received a shock. Engrossed in her sorrowful thoughts she was fixedly contemplating the screen that hid the prisoner's window; thus far that day he had shown no sign of life. All at once a piece of the screen, perhaps six inches square, disappeared as if by magic, and he looked out at her triumphantly; she could read the laughing salutation in his eyes. The surprise was too much for her; she wheeled about and began to attend to her birds, but her hand shook so that the water was spilled from the pitcher from which she was supplying them, and Fabrice could not help seeing her emotion. She could not endure the situation and had recourse to flight. The moment was incontestably the happiest of our hero's life; had his liberty been offered him just then he would have refused it with disdain.

The next day was to the Duchess a day of despair and bitterness. Every one in the city considered Fabrice's case absolutely hopeless. Clelia had not the strength of mind to manifest toward him a severity that had no existence in her heart; she spent an hour and a

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half in the aviary, reading his signals and frequently replying to them, if only by her expression of lively and sincere interest; from time to time she left the window in order to hide her tears. In her feminine coquetry she keenly felt how imperfect were their means of communication; how many different methods she might employ, could they but speak to each other, of arriving at an exact knowledge of his sentiments toward the Duchess! Clelia could no longer be mistaken about the matter; she hated Mme. Sanseverina.

One evening when Fabrice was in a meditative mood his aunt's image rose to his mind; he was surprised to find it so changed as to be almost unrecognizable; she appeared to him in the guise of a woman of fifty.

"Heavens!" he fervently exclaimed, "what a lucky thing for me it was that I did n't tell her I loved her!" He could not see how it was that he had once regarded her as such a pretty woman. Reverting to little Marietta, he found the impression of change in that quarter not nearly so distinct; the reason of this was that he had never considered the spiritual part of him as being anywise mixed up with his love for Marietta, while he had

often thought that his whole soul was in the keeping of the Duchess. Looking back to his connection with the Duchess d'A—— and Marietta, they appeared to him now as two young creatures of an inferior order whose charm lay in their innocence and weakness, while the sublime image of Clelia Conti, asserting its dominion over his soul, inspired in him a sensation almost of awe. He saw only too clearly that his everlasting welfare was in the hands of the Governor's daughter, and that it lay with her to make him the happiest or most miserable of men. He lived in mortal fear lest some inexorable caprice on her part should bring to a sudden end the strange and delicious existence he was leading in her presence ; however, he owed to her the unbroken felicity of his first two months of captivity. Those were the times when twice a week General Fabio Conti reported to the Prince : "I can assure Your Highness that the prisoner del Dongo never exchanges a word with a living soul ; he divides his time between sleeping and giving way to his outbursts of despair."

Clelia came two or three times a day to look after her birds, sometimes remaining quite a while. If Fabrice had been less violently in

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love he would have seen that he was loved; but he had his doubts on that score. Clelia had had a piano moved into the aviary. While touching the keys, in the first place to notify her lover of her presence, and secondly to occupy the attention of the sentries pacing their beat beneath her windows, she answered with her eyes Fabrice's questions. There was one question, however, that she could never be got to answer, but if pressed would run away and sometimes remain invisible for an entire day; that was when Fabrice's signals spoke of sentiments whose significance it was impossible to misinterpret; on that point she was of adamantine firmness.

Thus, though he had but a narrow space in which to exert his activities, Fabrice led a busy life; it was entirely devoted to the solution of this momentous problem: "Does she love me?" The result of thousands of observations, incessantly renewed and as incessantly rejected, was this: "All her premeditated actions say no, but when she lets her eyes speak without prompting them beforehand they seem to confess a friendly feeling for me."

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Clelia hoped that she might never be forced to a confession, and it was to avert this peril that she had rejected with every appearance of indignation an entreaty that Fabrice had several times addressed to her. The wretchedly scanty resources at the poor prisoner's command, one would say, might have inspired Clelia with more compassion. His wish was to correspond with her by means of characters traced on the palm of his hand with a bit of charcoal that he had had the luck to find in his stove ; words were to be formed by describing letters separately, one at a time. The invention would have facilitated conversation in that he could have expressed exactly what was in his mind, and she would have been deprived of the resource of pretending she did not understand. His window was about twenty-five feet away from Clelia's ; to attempt to converse over the heads of the sentries patrolling in front of the Governor's palace would have been attended with too much risk. Fabrice was doubtful of being loved ; his doubts would have vanished had he had more experience of love, but no woman had ever possessed his whole heart. As it was, he had no suspicion

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of a secret which, had he known it, would have reduced him to despair: there was a scheme on foot to marry Clelia Conti to the Marquis Crescenzi, the wealthiest man at court.

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